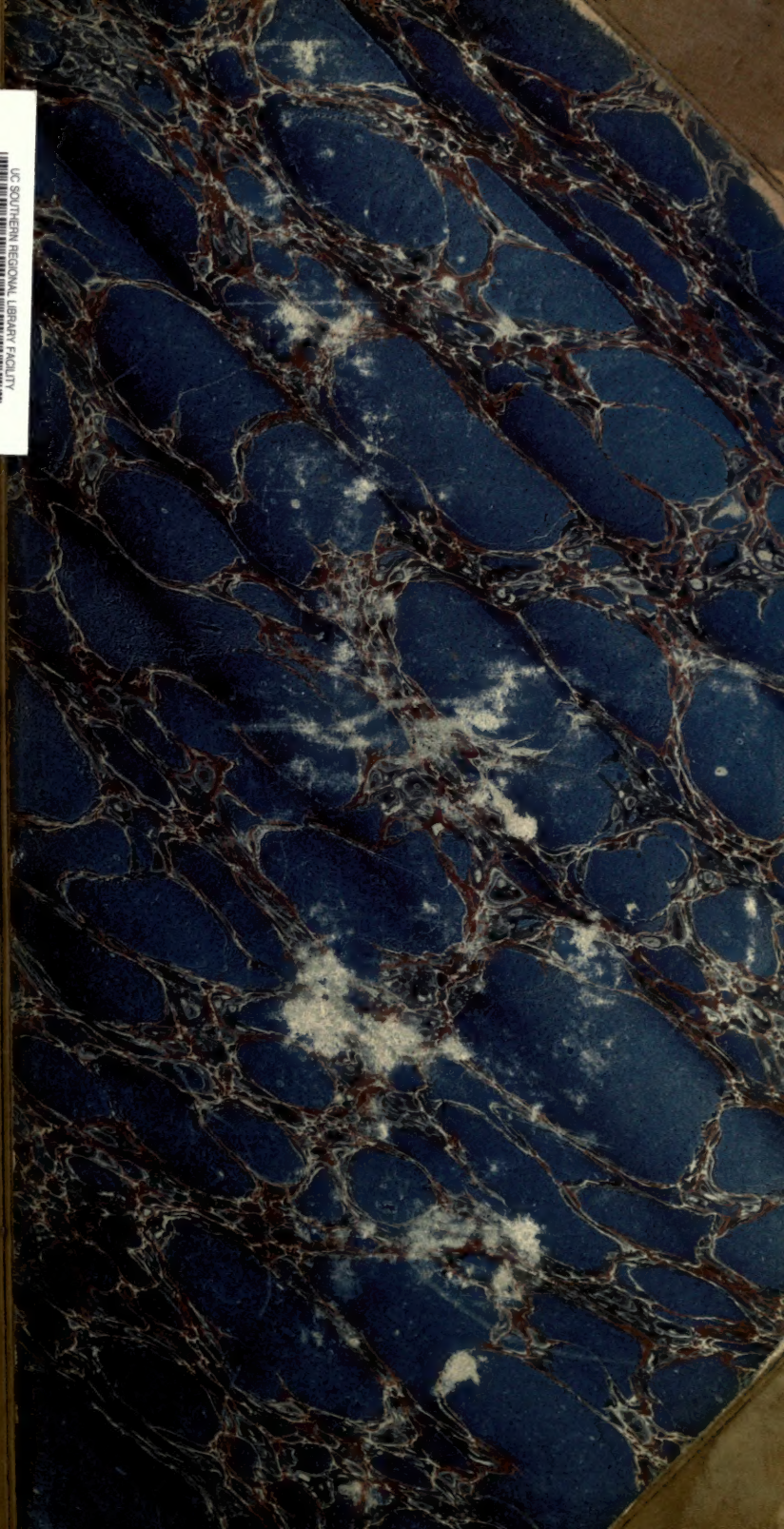


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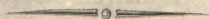
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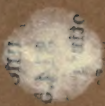
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LIVES OF EMINENT  
AND  
ILLUSTRIOUS ENGLISHMEN,

FROM  
ALFRED THE GREAT TO THE LATEST TIMES.

*On an Original Plan.*

EDITED BY  
GEORGE GODFREY CUNNINGHAM.

ILLUSTRATED BY A SERIES OF FINELY EXECUTED PORTRAITS, SELECTED FROM THE  
MOST AUTHENTIC SOURCES, AND ENGRAVED BY EMINENT ARTISTS.

VOLUME I.

GLASGOW:  
A. FULLARTON & CO., 110, BRUNSWICK STREET;  
AND 6, ROXBURGH PLACE, EDINBURGH

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MDCCCLXXVII.

GLASGOW:  
FULLARTON & CO, PRINTERS, VILLAGFIELD.



## ADDRESS.

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THE plan of the present Work is, we believe, original but it is simple, and possesses strong recommendations. Its object is to combine the advantages and attractions of HISTORY and BIOGRAPHY, by presenting to the reader the lives of those distinguished Englishmen who gave the tone and character to their times, or whose names are connected with British glory in arts or arms, in such an order as may mark their chronological relation to each other, and the events in which they were the prominent actors. The advantage of interest resulting from this mode of exhibiting a nation's history is obvious, as it will lead the reader's mind through the complexity of events by personal feelings and individual sympathies, instead of that comparatively cold, dry, and abstract sentiment which attends only to the strictly historical connexion of affairs. The reader of history, in its usual form, views things in so generalized and impersonal a light, that he is in danger of feeling the study grow heavy on his attention, as if it were a system of abstract science, and its successions those of demonstrative reasoning. Now, while we are far from wishing to discourage a study so sublime and important as that of philosophical history, we do not go too far when we say that the *popular* attractions of history do not reside in its *scientific principles*, but in its *personal interest*,—that the great majority of readers take less interest in the relation of events to abstract maxims, than in their connexion with the fortunes of individual men, with whom they can identify themselves in thought, and in the vicissitudes of whose lives they can take a home-felt and immediate concern.

Whoever, therefore, can most perfectly combine this personal interest with the series of public events, confers on history the greatest degree of that attraction which makes it studied by readers in general, and which, by enabling them to sympathise more completely with the prime actors in the drama of society, at once directs their eyes to the governing springs in its great movements, and brings home its moral lessons more powerfully and directly to their hearts. It is on this principle that we have thought that if

an alliance could be accomplished between the Muses of BIOGRAPHY and HISTORY, a work might be produced which, with equal truth and fulness of information, might possess superior interest, and therefore superior utility, for the mass of readers, to the present historical compendiums and biographical collections.

The plan by which we propose to carry our views into effect will be found, we trust, sufficiently obvious and simple to all intelligent readers. The whole Work will be arranged in nine general divisions, corresponding with the following nine distinct periods of English history, viz.

- I. From Alfred the Great to the Conquest.
- II. From the Conquest to the accession of Edward I.
- III. From Edward I. to the accession of Henry VII.
- IV. From Henry VII. to the accession of James I.
- V. From James I. to the Revolution.
- VI. From the Revolution to the accession of George I.
- VII. From George I. to the accession of George III.
- VIII. From George III. to the French Revolution.
- IX. From the French Revolution to the Present day.

Commencing our Lives with that of Alfred the Great, it is intended to carry down the series to the present day, without the omission of any one name closely identified with the civil, ecclesiastical, or literary features of English history. But in order to preserve the historical character of the work, the lives will be arranged under the divisions to which they *historically* belong, rather than in strict chronological order; and the better to secure continuity and distinctness of narration, each division will be subdivided into a Political, Ecclesiastical, and Literary department, to one or other of which every memoir historically belonging to the period treated of will be referred. Thus, considered simply in its biographical character, we shall furnish a national work of much interest; while in its indirect, but not secondary character we trust it will be found not less useful and attractive,—presenting, as it will, the series of public events, and the progress of English arts, clothed with a personal interest,—embodying the HISTORY of ENGLAND in the LIVES of ENGLISHMEN.



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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO FIRST PERIOD,

EXTENDING

FROM THE ACCESSION OF ALFRED TO THE CONQUEST,

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

OF

**Eminent Englishmen**

WHO FLOURISHED DURING THAT PERIOD.





# HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO

## FIRST PERIOD.

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Ancient Population of Britain—Roman Britain—Cassibelaunus—Caractacus—Boadicea—Vortigern—Britain abandoned by the Romans—Anglo-Saxons—Hengist and Horsa—Ella—Cerdic—Natanleod—Arthur—Cymric—The Heptarchy—Saxon Bretwaldas—Offa—Cenulph—Egbert—Bernulph—Ethelwulf—Ethelbald—Ethelbert—Ethelred.

ALL the traces of the past which we can still read in the present, as well as all traditional and recorded history, point to a spot situated somewhere in Central Asia as the cradle of our species, the fountain-head from which all the nations of the earth have descended. At what time the great primitive wave of population, generally designated the Gaelic, first set in upon the western regions of the world, we have no means of conjecturing even with an approach to certainty. There are reasons, however, for concluding that it had overflowed a great part of the continent of Europe, as well as the half-separated peninsulas of Greece and Italy—in both of which it had by that time been partially displaced by a succeeding wave—fully a thousand years before the Christian era. It is the opinion of some of those who have most elaborately examined this question,—of M. Gosselin, for instance, the learned French geographer,—and of our own acute and ingenious Whitaker, the historian of Manchester,—that it could not have been long after this date before the first emigrants began to pass over from Gaul to Britain. There can be no doubt, at all events, that it was from Gaul that Britain actually derived its first inhabitants. The position of the two countries,—the testimony of ancient authorities,—the resemblance of manners and customs,—the identity of religious doctrines and practices,—and, above all, the clear and strong testimony of language,—all prove the one people to have sprung from the other. The original name of our island is that by which it still continues to be designated in the language of our Scottish Gael, the unmixed descendants of its primitive inhabitants. They call it *Albinn*, as we find Aristotle, the most ancient of the classic authors by whom it is mentioned, calling it *Albion*. *Inn* is the Gaelic term for a large island; *alb*, though not now used by the Scottish Gael, is sufficiently ascer-

tained to have anciently signified white. It is preserved both in the Latin *albus*, and in the geographical terms *Alps* and *Apennines*, (that is, *Alp-pennin*, or white mountain,) these ridges being so called from the perpetual snow seen on their summits. *Albinn*, therefore, means the white island, and the name was probably given to Great Britain from the chalk cliffs which it presented to the view of the people on the opposite coast. As for the word *Britain*, numerous interpretations have been given of it; but perhaps the most probable is that advanced by Mr Whitaker, in his history of Manchester, and afterwards more fully developed in his "Genuine Origin of the Britons asserted," in answer to Mr Macpherson. It appears pretty clearly that *Britin*, the barbaric term from which the Greeks and Romans formed their smoother *Britannia*, was really the name not of the island but of its inhabitants. The termination *in*, in fact, which has so much perplexed Camden and other able antiquaries, is nothing more than the sign of the plural, according to the usual mode of declension in the Gaelic tongue. And *Brit*, Mr Whitaker maintains, signifies merely the divided or separated. It is in fact the same word with *brik* or *brechan*, a garment distinguished by divided or variegated colours, and still the common appellation of the Highland plaid. The *Britin*, therefore, were the separated people—or the emigrants, as we should say—those who had removed from the rest of their countrymen in Gaul, and settled in Albinn.

The whole of the southern coast of England, from Kent to the Land's End, appears to have been peopled in this way before either the more northern or the midland districts of the island had been penetrated. As the descendants of the original settlers, however, increased in number, and new bands of emigrants successively arrived from the mother-country, the back woods were gradually cleared, till, at last, the whole island had become inhabited. There is abundant evidence that this result had taken place long before the commencement of the Christian era. During this interval, also, a great part of Ireland had been taken possession of, and peopled, no doubt, from the neighbouring coasts of the west of England.

It seems to have been to one of the bands of foreign invaders, who thus overran Ireland, that the epithet *Scots* was first applied. The word—of which, however, different interpretations have been given—is most probably the same with the modern Gaelic term *scuit* or *scaoit*, signifying a wandering horde,—the origin, also, in all likelihood, of the name *Scythians*, so famous in all the records of these remote ages. From Ireland a branch of the Scots, several ages afterwards, passed over into Scotland, and eventually gave their name to the country. Scotland, however, had long before this been peopled both along its coasts, and in part, at least, of the interior, by the gradual movement northwards of the tide of population from South Britain. The general name given to the inhabitants of the northern part of the island before, and for some centuries after the era of Christianity, was not Scots, but *Caledonians*, that is, *Caoilldaoin*, men of the woods. They are spoken of by the Roman writers as divided into the *Deucaledones* and the *Veturiones*. The former of these designations is the Gaelic *Duchaoill-daoin*, literally the true or real inhabitants of the woods; and it was applied to the mountaineers in the north-western part of the country, or what we now call the Highlands, as distinguished from the inhabi-



tants of the plains. These latter were denominated *Vecturiones*—pronounced by the Romans *Wecturiones*—a word smoothed down from the Gaelic *Uachtarich*, that is, the people of the part of the country called *Uachtar*, the name given to the Lowlands, and still preserved in the appellation of the mountainous ridge *Drumuachtar*, from which the descent of the country towards the east commences. Some antiquaries have held the Roman term *Picti* to be merely a corruption of *Uachtarich*, and therefore to be in point of fact the same with *Vecturiones*. Others conceive it to be the common Latin word signifying painted, applied by the South Britons—after they had themselves fallen under the yoke and acquired the language of the Romans—to their unconquered brethren of the north, who, with their liberty, still preserved their ancient savage customs, and that one among others, of adorning their bodies with figures formed of colours daubed upon or impressed into the skin,—the tattooing of the modern South Sea islanders. However this may be, nothing can be more certain, notwithstanding the special pleading by which another theory has been attempted to be supported, than that the people called by our historians Picts, and who inhabited the level country along the east coast of Scotland, were a Gaelic or British race, and spoke a dialect of the common Gaelic tongue of the rest of their countrymen. We incline, for our own part, to consider the term *Picts*—or rather *Pechts*, for so it is still generally pronounced in Scotland—as not a Latin but a Gaelic word, whether the same with *Uachtarich*, or not. But in this brief sketch we can only attempt to state the leading results to which those have arrived who have, in our opinion, most successfully investigated this extensive, dark, and intricate subject. The reader has now before him as complete a view as our limits will permit us to give, of the manner in which the British islands were originally peopled, and the import of the several names by which both the country and its earliest inhabitants were distinguished. The sum of the whole is, that the primitive colonists and possessors both of Great Britain and Ireland, the Britons, the Caledonians, the Scots, and the Picts, were all equally Gaelic tribes. We prefer the term *Gael*, or *Gauls*, to that of *Celts*, or *Kelts*, who in fact were only a particular division of the Gauls. The Celts were the *Caoiltich*, or the inhabitants of the woody country, so called from *caoill*, a wood, the same element which enters into the composition of the epithet *Caledonii*, as already noticed.

With the exception of these general facts, the whole of British history is nearly an impenetrable night, till we come down almost to within half a century of the birth of Christ. In the year 55 before that event, the troops of the Mistress of the world first landed upon this remote isle, led by the invincible Cæsar. This memorable invasion is calculated to have taken place about five o'clock in the afternoon of the 26th of August. Cæsar's pretence for thus attacking the Britons was, that they had been in the habit of sending over assistance to their kindred, the inhabitants of Gaul, with whom he was then at war. It is likely enough that there may have been some truth in this accusation; but there can be no doubt that the real motive which impelled the great Roman leader to carry his arms to Britain, was merely the same ambition of conquest which mainly led him on in every part of his brilliant but destructive career. The Britons, however, opposed a

bold resistance to the enemy; and although they did not succeed in preventing the landing of the Roman legions, they speedily convinced the commander that their subjugation was not likely to be effected quite so easily as he had probably anticipated. After having remained in the country for three or four weeks, and granted a peace to the natives, on receiving from them a number of hostages, he again set out for Gaul, without even leaving any portion of his troops behind him to maintain the nominal conquest which he had made. In the following spring, however, he again landed with a much more powerful armament than before. The Britons, also, were this time better prepared to meet their formidable invaders. Having wisely and patriotically made up, or at least agreed to forget for the present, the differences that had hitherto divided them into so many hostile tribes, they united their forces under the command of the most celebrated warrior of their nation, Cassibelaunus, king of the Trinobantes, who inhabited the territory immediately to the north of the Thames. But all their bravery was vain against the experience and consummate discipline of the Roman soldiers. After a war of a few months, in the course of which several pitched battles were fought, almost uniformly terminating in the defeat of the Britons, Cassibelaunus and several of the other chiefs found themselves compelled to sue for peace on the hard condition of acknowledging the sovereignty of Rome, and thus surrendering the liberties of their country. The conqueror was satisfied with this measure of submission, and after the imposition of a tribute, again withdrew with all his troops to Gaul. His stay in the country on this second occasion, is supposed to have been about four months in all, or from the middle of May to that of September.

Cæsar, as Tacitus remarks, rather showed the Romans the way to Britain, than actually put them in possession of it. For twenty years after his time, no tribute was derived from the nominally vanquished barbarians. Augustus then threatened to punish them for their disobedience; but although he advanced as far as Gaul for that purpose, he returned without actually visiting the country, upon the Britons sending ambassadors to meet him with a renewed offer of their allegiance. For many years after this they remained undisturbed. It was not till the 43d year of our era, in the reign of the emperor Claudius, that any thing like an attempt was made to effect a real conquest of the island. In that year the Roman general, Plautius, landed from Gaul at the head of a considerable force. Several engagements ensued; but although the Britons fought courageously, the advantage was generally on the side of their assailants. The commander-in-chief of the British forces in this war, was the famous Caratacus, one of the successors of Cassibelaunus in the sovereignty of the Trinobantes. The following year, the emperor himself joined his lieutenant; and, after his arrival, the war was prosecuted with so much vigour, that in the course of a few weeks all resistance on the part of the natives was almost at an end. Claudius then returned to Rome, leaving Plautius to maintain and extend the conquests of the imperial arms. That general is said to have fought thirty pitched battles with the Britons before he was recalled in the year 50. Only a very small part of the country, however, had yet been subjugated, or even entered, by the Roman troops. Plautius was succeeded by Ostorius Scapula,

in the first year of whose government, the people inhabiting a large district of country to the north of the Thames, headed by Caractacus, again took up arms, with the determination, if possible, to expel the invaders. But the result was the same as on former occasions; the insurgents were defeated with great loss, and Caractacus himself, with his wife and children, fell into the hands of the victors. This unfortunate prince was sent to Rome, where the multitude of that proud capital had the gratification of beholding him led in chains, along with his family, to the feet of their emperor, although not that of exulting over his drooping aspect or dejected air. Caractacus, even in captivity, did not forget what he had been, but bore himself still with the dignity of a king, and addressed the emperor in a short oration—which Tacitus has preserved—full of philosophy and noble sentiment. Nor did Claudius show himself incapable of appreciating the demeanour of his illustrious prisoner. He immediately ordered the badges of servitude to be removed from the persons of the British prince and his unhappy companions. Meanwhile, in Britain, the still unsubdued spirit of the people opposed a formidable barrier to the further progress of their invaders, and even made it necessary for Ostorius to employ all his skill and vigilance in order to retain the ground of which he was already in possession. In the year 53, that general died of vexation, it is said, at the little impression he was able to make on his barbarian enemies. He was succeeded by Aulus Didius, under whom, and his successor Veranius, the war was carried on for about five years longer, without any decided success.

In the year 58, Suetonius Paulinus arrived to assume the government. He immediately resorted to much stronger measures than had been ventured upon by his predecessors, and having made himself master of the sacred island of Mona—now Anglesey—endeavoured to strike terror into the natives by the relentless destruction of their altars and their consecrated groves. The effect of this severity was, probably, only to kindle in their hearts a keener indignation than ever against the insolent invaders of their country. While they were in this mood, an incident occurred which at once exasperated them to the highest pitch of fury. This was the brutal usage inflicted upon Boadicea, the widow of one of their princes, Prasutagus, king of the Iceni, by the officers of the Roman emperor, who seized upon the whole property of the deceased chief, under the pretence that he had left it to their master by his wife. Prasutagus, in fact, had, at the time of his death, been in alliance with the Romans, and had left the one half of what he possessed to the emperor, and the other to his daughters. The rights of the latter, however, were entirely disregarded by the rapacious foreigners. Boadicea, a bold and high-minded woman, remonstrated with spirit; but her courage only brought down upon herself and her children additional and more cruel injuries. A general attack by the enraged Britons, upon all the Roman settlements, was the immediate consequence; and such was the sanguinary impetuosity with which this grand explosion of national vengeance was directed, that seventy or eighty thousand of the unfortunate Romans, of every age and sex, are asserted to have fallen, almost without resistance, under the swords of their merciless assailants. But this terrible massacre was destined to be soon as terribly expiated. The Roman general



hastening back from Mona, without losing a moment, proceeded to meet the insurgents, who were drawn up not far from London, to the number of a hundred thousand, under the command of Boadicea. A battle ensued, in which the Britons were routed with immense slaughter. Tacitus says that eighty thousand of them were slain. Boadicea herself only escaped falling into the hands of the victors, by swallowing poison.<sup>1</sup> This was the last great effort which the South Britons made to recover their liberty. Paulinus was recalled two years afterwards—in the year 62—and was followed in the government by Petronius Turpilianus, under whom, and his several immediate successors, nothing memorable occurred.

The true conqueror of Britain arrived in the year 78, about the end of the reign of the emperor Vespasian, in the person of the famous Julius Agricola. This able commander continued governor of Britain for above six years, during which he gradually fought his way almost to the northern extremity of the island, and if he did not actually subdue the whole country, at least carried to its utmost borders, the fame and the terror of the Roman arms. It was in the year 84, in the course of what is called his 7th campaign, that Agricola encountered and defeated the Caledonian general, Galgacus, at the foot of the Grampians. Ten thousand of the Caledonians are said to have fallen in this action.<sup>2</sup> Agricola, however, did not attempt to preserve the conquest of these remote wilds, but contented himself with endeavouring to secure the southern part of the island, by building a series of forts along the narrow neck of land between the friths of Forth and Clyde. Agricola was the great civilizer as well as the conqueror of Britain; and wisely perceiving that the surest way of maintaining the tranquillity and obedience of the newly vanquished province was to inspire the inhabitants with a love for the arts as well as with a dread for the arms of Rome, he spared no pains to diffuse among them a knowledge of letters and the other blessings of an advanced state of social refinement.<sup>3</sup> One of the consequences of this policy was to establish between the inhabitants of the southern and those of the northern part of the island, a separation much more complete than even that which the fortified wall that divided them would of itself have effected. They were separated from each other by a wide discordance in tastes, habits, manners, acquirements, in all that makes up the difference between civilization and barbarism. The Caledonians, therefore, now began to look upon the Britons who resided within the Roman province as equally with the Romans themselves their national enemies. The first irruption, however, which we read of as having been made by these unsubdued savages of the north, happened in the year 117, in the beginning of the reign of the emperor Adrian.

<sup>1</sup> Tac. 34—37.—Dio. Nic. apud Xiphil. in Ner. p. 176. "Dio. has described this British heroine as a woman of lofty stature and severe countenance. Her yellow hair reached almost to the ground. She wore a plaited tunic of various colours, round her waist a chain of gold, and over these a long mantle, p. 173."—LINGARD.

<sup>2</sup> Tac. Agric. 24—38.

<sup>3</sup> "At his instigation the chieftains left their habitations in the forests, and repaired into the vicinity of the Roman stations. There they learned to admire the refinements of civilization and acquired a taste for improvement. The use of the Roman toga began to supersede that of the British mantle: houses, baths, temples, were built in the Roman fashion: children were instructed in the Roman language; and with the manners were adopted the vices of the Romans."—LINGARD.

Adrian himself came over to repel this attack ; but, upon his arrival, instead of endeavouring to drive back the invaders of the province into their native wilds, he judged it more prudent to endeavour to render the province more defensible by contracting its limits ; and, accordingly, relinquishing altogether the northern part of it, he erected at its utmost boundary in that direction a rampart from the mouth of the Tyne to the Solway frith. This fortification—of which the traces are still very visible in many parts—was formed entirely of earth, and consisted principally of a mound and a ditch. Although of considerable strength, however, it was found insufficient to prevent the inroads of the Caledonians. They soon broke through it in various places. In the year 140, therefore, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, the Roman governor Lollius Urbicus resolved to reassume the possession of the part of the province which had been abandoned by Adrian, and for this purpose he again erected a very strong wall nearly on the line of the series of forts originally built by Agricola. This wall—the same of which the remains are still popularly known by the name of *Graham's Dike*—was built of turf on a foundation of stone, and was four yards in breadth. On the north side of it was a very wide ditch, and on the south a magnificent military way. This fortification appears to have effectually barred out the Caledonians for many years. But at last in the year 205, in the reign of the emperor Severus, they renewed their incursions. Two years after, Severus himself, accompanied by his two sons, Caracalla and Geta, came over to repel the barbarians ; and, in order to put an end for ever to their troublesome hostility, he resolved if possible to effect the subjugation of the whole island. He did accordingly succeed in penetrating to its northern extremity ; but having lost the immense number of fifty thousand men in the expedition, he abandoned his design of conquest, and contented himself with raising a new wall of freestone along the line of Adrian's earthen rampart between the Tyne and the Solway, thus contracting the limits of the province instead of enlarging them as he had originally intended. This wall—of which fragments still remain—appears to have been about eight feet thick and about twelve in height. It was fortified along its whole length by a series of towers disposed at equal distances. Shortly after its completion Severus died at York, on which his two sons, who succeeded him, both returned to Rome.

The history of Britain for more than a century and a half after this time merges in that of the empire of which it formed a part. We cannot here attempt to detail the disputes and commotions which are recorded to have taken place among the Roman soldiery, although the contest for the dignity of Master of the world was sometimes fought and decided in this distant dependency. Meanwhile, however, the Roman occupation of South Britain was gradually changing the aspect of the country as well as the manners and the minds of the inhabitants. The wilderness and the untilled desert were every where giving place to towns and cultivated fields. About the middle of the third century, the planting of vines is said to have been introduced under the auspices of the emperor Probus. This long course of quiet and prosperity, however, was at length interrupted about the year 364, in the reign of Valentinian I., by the renewed attacks of the northern barbarians ; but after a war which lasted for some years they were at last driven back

to their native wilds, by Theodosius—father of the emperor of the same name—who then erected a new line of forts between the friths of Forth and Clyde, and gave the name of the province of Valentia to the territory which he thus added to the Roman colony.

In the year 393, died the emperor Theodosius, on which the western empire passed into the hands of his youngest son, Honorius, a boy of eleven years of age. From this moment the decline of the Roman glory was rapid and almost uninterrupted. The various Gothic tribes who inhabited the regions beyond the Danube, the extensive forests of Germany, and the more northern coasts of Scandinavia, had already for many years pressed with continually increasing strength upon the frontiers of the Roman world. After the accession of Honorius, their attacks were made with much more system and determination than ever; and notwithstanding the able exertions of his minister and general Stilicho, which for some time succeeded in averting the catastrophe, it became every day more evident that the empire of the Cæsars was fast approaching its dissolution. While the signs of debility and a coming change were manifesting themselves every where else, the aspect of affairs in Britain also presented similar indications. The native youth had for a long time past been drawn in great numbers from the island, as soon as they became of military age, to serve in the legions that were employed in other parts of the empire; and now even the troops forming the usual and the sole protecting force of the province, were suddenly recalled to repel the inroads of the barbarians from Gaul and Italy itself. This happened about the commencement of the fifth century. On the departure of the Roman soldiery, the Scots and Picts almost immediately renewed their attacks upon South Britain. A season of great misery followed to the inhabitants of that unhappy province.

It was in the year 410, according to the best historians,<sup>4</sup> that the Romans took their final leave of the island. The southern part of it was now again left as free as the northern had always been; but, for the present crisis, the arts and social refinements which the South Britons had learned from their civilized conquerors, formed but a valueless substitute for the martial skill and ardour which long habits of peace had lulled asleep, and for the strength of the nation which had been so lavishly wasted in foreign wars. Feeble and defenceless as they were, they felt the removal of the Roman yoke to be in reality not their liberation but their abandonment.

We shall not repeat here the narrative of events which we find in the British historian Gildas, disproved as many of the statements of that writer are by their irreconcilable contradiction to the ascertained chronology of those times. The celebrated letter of the miserable Britons to the Roman commander Ætius, in which they are made to say, "We know not which way to turn us; the barbarians drive us to the sea, and the sea forces us back to the barbarians," is probably the composition of that declaimer himself. We need not doubt, however, that there is much truth in his general picture of the state of perplexity and terror to which his countrymen were now reduced. Harassed as they were by their northern enemies, they were at the same time torn

<sup>4</sup> See Turner's *Anglo-Saxons*, Book I. chap. 9.



to pieces by distractions which broke out among themselves, excited as it would seem, by the contentions of several competitors for the supreme power. At last, however, the sovereignty at least of all the southern and principal regions, appears to have been acquired by Gwrtheyrn, or Wrtheyrn, or, as we shall take the liberty of calling him after Geoffrey of Monmouth, Vortigern. The accession of Vortigern, who had been previously prince of the Damnonii, or inhabitants of Devon and Cornwall, to the monarchy of England, is dated in the year 445.

For a long time before even the termination of the Roman dominion in Britain, the east coast of the island had been infested by bands of those famous pirates, who, under the name of Saxons, had from the termination of the third century made a principal figure among the barbarian powers of the North. The original seat of the Saxons comprehended the three small islands now denominated North Strandt, Busen, and Heligoland, near the mouth of the Elbe, with a small part of the opposite continent of Jutland.<sup>5</sup> By the time of which we now speak, however, the confederacy of the Saxons, the Jutes, and the Angles, had reduced under their subjection, the whole of the large tract of country lying between the Elbe and the Rhine. The Jutes—a word which seems to be really the same with the term *Getae*, or *Goths*—originally inhabited that southern portion of Jutland which now forms the dutchy of Sleswick; and the possessions of the Angles consisted properly of the district of Anglen in the same dutchy. These three nations, or tribes, however,—all equally Goths by descent—were, as we have just intimated, again so completely united by the middle of the fifth century, as to be generally looked upon as forming only one people or political confederacy. In their descents upon the British coast, even when it was guarded by the military force of Rome, parties of these adventurous plunderers had repeatedly spread the greatest alarm and devastation. Hitherto, however, they had not attempted to effect any settlement in the country; but perceiving the state of weakness and confusion to which it was reduced on its abandonment by the Romans, it is not unlikely that some of their leaders may now have begun to contemplate its conquest and permanent occupation. Meanwhile, they were encouraged to attempt the execution of this project by what appears to have been quite a fortuitous event, which unexpectedly brought them into intimate connexion with the existing government of the Britons.

In the year 449, a body of Saxons, or more properly of Jutes, amounting, it is supposed, to not more than three hundred men, and conducted by two brothers, Hengist and Horsa, arrived in three vessels at the port of Ebbsfleet, now an inland spot at some distance from the sea, but then close to the estuary of the Wantsum, the river—now reduced to a brook—which divided the isle of Thanet from the mainland of Kent. At this moment, Vortigern and his chiefs or nobles happened to be assembled in council to consider what should be done to repel the Scots and other enemies by whom the country was attacked and ravaged. On the arrival of the Saxons being announced, some one proposed that application should be made to these warlike strangers

<sup>5</sup> Cluver. Ant. Ger. III.

to lend their aid, on certain conditions, in driving back the invaders. In the state of distress, and almost of despair, to which they were reduced, the assembly resolved upon the adoption of this humiliating and withal hazardous expedient, as the only course that seemed to present a chance of saving the country. Negotiations were accordingly opened; and an arrangement was soon concluded by which the Saxons agreed to assist with their best endeavours, in the service to which their aid was required, on condition of receiving food and clothing, and being permitted in the meantime to fix their station in the isle of Thanet. It does not appear that any permanent occupation by the foreigners, even of that portion of territory, was in the first instance, either agreed to or dreamed of by the unsuspecting Britons. The more wary Saxons, however, no doubt saw more clearly the advantage which they might derive from thus obtaining a footing in the country. In the meantime, however, they proceeded without loss of time to perform their engagement, and having encountered the forces of the Scots and Picts, they soon succeeded in defeating and dispersing them.

Such, according to the most trustworthy accounts that have come down to us, was the commencement of the Saxon conquest of Britain. The course of the events that immediately followed has been very imperfectly recorded. It appears however, that the Saxon leaders, on the plausible pretence that the northern tribes, although driven away for the present, would, in all likelihood, soon resume their inroads, not only obtained permission to remain for some time longer in the island, but even prevailed upon Vortigern and his counsellors, to allow them to call over from time to time additional bands of their countrymen to enable them the more effectually to repel these invaders. In this way, Hengist is said to have augmented the forces under his command, first by the importation of as many more of his countrymen as filled seventeen cyules, or yawls, one of which conveyed his daughter, Rowena, and some time after by another band, occupying forty such vessels, and conducted by his eldest son, Æsca. Most of our readers are probably familiar with the story—which rests, however, merely on the authority of Nennius, a writer who does not appear to have flourished till long after this period—of the feast given by Hengist to Vortigern, at which the latter was so much captivated by the charms of Rowena, that he requested her of her father, to be his wife,—a demand which, it is affirmed, was not assented to by the Saxon leader, until he had prevailed upon the British monarch to make over to him and Horsa, the whole of Kent. Whatever truth there may be in this tradition, it is certain that after the Saxons had been for some time in the country, they began to be looked upon by the natives with a suspicion and jealousy which rapidly grew into open hostility. The strangers on being required to leave the country, now avowed frankly their intention of remaining where they were. A war began in consequence, between the two parties, when the unscrupulous Saxons immediately formed an alliance with those very Picts and Scots whom they had been originally hired to oppose. They are said to have been also assisted by the neutrality at least, if not by the active co-operation of Vortigern, whose infatuated passion for Rowena had utterly extinguished in his bosom alike all attachment to his country and all sense of honour.

Guortemir, or Vortimer, however, the son of the unhappy monarch, offered himself to his countrymen in this emergency as their leader. Under his conduct the Britons fought numerous battles with the Saxons. The scene of one of the most famous of these engagements, was at Ailesford in Kent. Here, Horsa fell on the side of the Saxons, and Categirn, the brother of Vortimer, on that of the Britons. Another great battle was fought at a place called Stonar, on the coast fronting France; and such was the success of the Britons on this occasion, that the whole of the Saxons who escaped from the slaughter are asserted to have immediately taken to their ships and returned to the continent.<sup>6</sup> This was in the year 455. The fugitives, however, very soon returned in greater force than ever. Nennius relates that soon after his arrival, Hengist pretended to sue for peace, and prevailed upon a great many of the British chiefs, with Vortigern at their head, to meet him at a banquet which he gave in celebration of the reconciliation of the two nations, when, on his uttering a preconcerted exclamation, the Saxons who were present suddenly drew forth their short swords which they had brought with them concealed under their cloaks, and instantly massacred all their guests with the exception of the British king. It seems to have been now that the Saxon leader for the first time assumed the title of king of Kent. Another great battle was soon after this fought at Crayford, which terminated in the complete defeat of the Britons, and left Hengist for a long time in undisturbed possession of his new kingdom. Although the native powers some years afterwards renewed the contest, they were never able to make any impression upon the band of foreigners who had thus established themselves in one of the fairest provinces of the island.

It was a considerable space of time before the success of Hengist and his followers tempted any others of the Saxon chiefs to try their fortunes in the same path of adventure. The next who arrived was Ella, also as well as Hengist a descendant of the celebrated Woden, or Odin, the leader under whose conduct the Saxons believed that their ancestors had originally come to Europe from the East. Ella landed with his three sons at a port in Sussex in the year 477. Although all his men were contained in three ships, he completely put to flight the British forces by whom he was attacked; and succeeded in establishing himself so firmly in the country that it was afterwards found impossible to dislodge him. In this manner was founded the kingdom of Sussex.

The third body of Saxon invaders arrived in the year 495, under the command of Cerdic, another chief who likewise boasted of being sprung from the great patriarch of his nation. Cerdic came with five ships; and is generally supposed to have made his descent at Yarmouth. This chief turned out by far the most formidable opponent the Britons had yet had to encounter. His predecessors had contented themselves with endeavouring to secure possession each of the separate district or corner of the land on which he happened to have first set his foot; but Cerdic seemed to contemplate nothing less than the entire conquest of the country. We know but little of his earlier operations; but in the

<sup>6</sup> Nennius, c. 46. The Saxon annalist claims the honour of this fight for his countrymen, and says that the Britons in consequence retired from Kent. Chron. Sax. 13.—Batteley thinks that this conflict took place at Stone-end in the south corner of Kent. Antiq. Rut. 19.



year 501, it is stated, that, having received an augmentation to his forces by the arrival of two ships at Portsmouth, under the command of Porta—who gave his name to the place—he proceeded to drive the Britons from the whole of the southern part of the island. This attempt gave rise to a long and bloody war, which was not brought to a termination during the lifetime of Cerdic, nor till the unhappy Britons had been completely subdued. The accounts, however, which have come down to us of this protracted struggle, are even more than usually obscure, imperfect, and mixed with fable. Cerdic is stated to have made himself master of Hampshire, and to have there established what was afterwards called the kingdom of the West Saxons, by the year 519.

The greatest battle which is mentioned as having taken place up to this time, was one which was fought at Chardford in Hampshire in the year 508, when the British king, Natanleod—whom some suppose to be the same with Ambrosius, the successor of Vortigern—was left dead on the field, with five thousand of his followers. The commander of the British forces in most of the engagements which took place for a long period after this, was the famous Arthur, King or Prince of Cornwall, who, if we are to believe the common accounts, however, commenced his military career under Ambrosius, in the year 466, when he was yet a boy of fourteen. His history has been so overlaid with the marvellous, that many modern writers, so far from crediting the old accounts of his martial exploits, have even refused to believe in his existence. Little doubt, however, is now entertained that he was a real personage; and that he acted an important part in this last protracted and arduous struggle, sustained by his countrymen in defence of their expiring liberties and independence. But we cannot attempt in this place to go over the long detail of his military exploits, as they have been handed down to us by the Welsh bards, and other writers who have affected to record his history. His life, according to the common accounts, was protracted to the great extent of ninety years, when he was at last, in the year 542, mortally wounded in a battle, fought near Camelford, against the Saxons assisted by his nephew, Modred.<sup>7</sup> Before this, however, his great antagonist, Cerdic, had also been removed from the scene of strife and blood. The death of that monarch took place in the year 534, when he was succeeded by his son Cynric. Cynric continued the war with the same perseverance and ability which had been displayed by his father, and defeated the Britons in a succession of engagements with great slaughter. The consequence of these successes was the enlargement of the kingdom of Wessex by the annexation to the county of Hampshire, originally conquered by Cerdic, of the territory now forming the adjoining counties of Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire. Cynric was succeeded in the year 560 by his eldest son Cealwin, nearly the whole of whose reign was likewise spent in warring with the often-beaten, but still unvanquished Britons. Cealwin, however, extended his dominions over Gloucestershire and a part of Somersetshire, after which measure of success he seems to have declined the attempt of pursuing his conquest farther into the interior.

<sup>7</sup> Some writers place this battle two years later. The Red book of Hergest dates it in 576.

Meanwhile, however, other bands of adventurers from Germany had long ere this followed the first invaders, and successively wrested from the unfortunate Britons other portions of their country. The kingdom of East Anglia was founded in the year 527 by one of these bands; that of Essex was established by another of them about the year 530. This kingdom eventually comprehended the county of Middlesex, and consequently the town of London, within its bounds. In the year 547, Ida, another descendant of Woden, accompanied by his twelve sons, and having under his command forty vessels, all filled by warriors of the nation of the Angles, made a descent upon the west immediately to the mouth of the Humber; and the result of this attempt was the eventual establishment—although not until the natives had maintained a long and obstinate struggle with their invaders—of two additional kingdoms, the one called by the monkish historians, that of Deira, from the old British name *Deifyn*, comprehending the country immediately to the north of the Humber, and the other that of Bernicia—as Latinized from the British term *Bryneich*—which appears to have extended as far as to the Forth, one of its principal towns bearing the name of Eidyn, and being supposed to be the original of the present Edinburgh.

By the year 560, therefore, seven different monarchies had been formed in Britain by these German tribes, namely, that of Kent by the Jutes, those of Sussex, Wessex, and Essex by the Saxons, and those of East Anglia, Bernicia, and Deira by the Angles. To these were added, about the year 586, an eighth, called the kingdom of Mercia, also founded by the Angles, and comprehending nearly the whole of the heart of the kingdom. These states formed together what has been designated the Anglo-Saxon Octarchy, or more commonly, though not so correctly, the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy, from the custom of speaking of Deira and Bernicia under the single appellation of the kingdom of Northumberland.

The conquest of South Britain by the Jutes, Angles, and Saxons, it appears from what has been stated, was not effected until after one of the most obstinate and protracted struggles recorded in history. The war lasted indeed, almost without intermission, from the middle of the fifth to the middle of the seventh century; and was occasionally renewed even down to so late a date as the beginning of the ninth. We cannot, however, in such an abstract as the present, enter into any minute detail of the events of this long contest. It is sufficient to state, that although the Britons sometimes succeeded in winning a battle, or gaining some other advantage, the tide of success was, upon the whole, with their opponents, who gradually dispossessed the old inhabitants of South Britain of all the territory occupied by their ancestors, with the exception of the mountainous and secluded district now called Wales, and formerly *Welshland*, that is, the land of the *Wilise*, or Foreigners, a Teutonic term identical in meaning and etymology with the Celtic *Gael*. Even after they had been driven into this mere corner of their former broad domains, the Cymri—the name by which they have always called themselves—seem to have been forced eventually, and before they were allowed to remain undisturbed in their fastnesses, to acknowledge the sovereignty of their Saxon conquerors. Not only Egbert the Great, but others of the Saxon kings, long before the time

of Edward I., who finally added the principality to the English crown, had certainly compelled the inhabitants of Wales, as well as of the rest of England, at least to profess allegiance to them as the lords paramount of the whole country from the sea to the Forth.

There is not a more intricate maze in history than that formed by the transactions of the different Saxon states established in Britain. The annals which have come down to us of several of these petty kingdoms do not furnish us even with an unbroken succession of the sovereigns; and even where the narrative is more full, inexplicable obscurities or contradictions meet us in almost every page. Looking to these considerations, and also to the little interest for the general reader attaching to the revolutions of a mob of monarchies, the traces of the separate existence of which are now, for the most part, so utterly defaced, we shall not attempt here either to pursue with tedious particularity the thread of the history of each, or to chronicle the weary series of quarrels and broils in which they were almost incessantly engaged with one another. We must limit ourselves to the mere outline of this thick crowd of events. And for that purpose, our best plan will be to follow the sovereign, or at least the ascendant authority, as it transferred itself from one to another of the rival powers. For it is important to observe—although this has been too much overlooked by most of our historians—that from the first establishment of the Saxons in Great Britain, there was always some one of the contemporary rulers who was accounted the chief over the others,—the *Bretwalda*, as he was called, or emperor of Britain, as the term may be translated. The *Bretwalda* was looked upon as the true representative or successor of the ancient British monarchs,—as occupying, in fact, the place formerly held by Vortigern and his descendants subsequently to the abandonment of the country by the Romans. The authority exercised by this nominal sovereign was often indeed, practically, not much felt; he stood somewhat in the same position in which the emperor of Germany used to stand to the electors of the empire,—having little or no power, for instance, to interfere in the internal affairs of the several subordinate states, or even to prevent them from going to war with each other. But yet, although in point of fact the dignity seems to have been deemed, by those who acknowledged, if not always by him who held it, little more than titular, it at least implied that the particular state by the sovereign of which it was borne, was, for the time, more powerful than any of its neighbours; and by accompanying its movements, therefore, as it passed from one sceptre to another, we shall obtain a view of the rise and fall, in succession, of each of the principal states.<sup>8</sup>

According to Mr Palgrave,<sup>9</sup> Ella, who, as already mentioned, arrived in the island in the year 477, and afterwards founded the kingdom of the South Saxons—comprehending the two modern counties of Sussex and Surrey—was the first *Bretwalda*. In this capacity, after the death of Hengist, he commanded the armies of his countrymen in their united contest with the Britons. Ella died in 514, and was succeeded by his son, Cissa, who is said to have reigned for the long period of seventy-six years. His death is placed in the year 590, which,

<sup>8</sup> We have the high authority of Lingard for our mode of treating this portion of our country's annals.

<sup>9</sup> History of England, vol. i. p. 77.



as he is stated to have come over from Germany with his father, would make him to have lived at least above 115 years ; but there is doubtless some error in this account. On the death of Cissa, who left no children, his kingdom was seized by Ceawlin, king of Wessex, the son of Cenric, and grandson of Cerdic ; and the South Saxons, though they often attempted to regain their independence, were never afterwards able to emancipate themselves from the yoke of their conqueror and his descendants. Even before he had thus taken possession of the kingdom of Ella, Ceawlin had assumed his title of Bretwalda, and had compelled the other princes to recognise his supremacy. His violent usurpation of the throne of Sussex, however, at last provoked the formation of a confederacy against him, and, being defeated in 593, in a great battle fought at Wansdike, in Wiltshire, he died soon after. His nephew, Ceolric, however, whom he had made viceroy of Sussex, having joined the league against him, contrived in this way to be allowed to retain possession both of that conquest and of the kingdom of Wessex, to which he succeeded by inheritance. But Ethelbert, king of Kent, a very able prince, and who had been the leader of the opposition against Ceawlin, was appointed to the dignity of Bretwalda. Ethelbert was the great grandson of Æsca, the son of Hengist, from whom the kings of Kent were usually denominated *Æscingas*. His supremacy as Bretwalda, was acknowledged by all the states except that of Northumbria, the independence of which he never succeeded in subduing. But on the death, in 594, of Cridda, the first king of Mercia, Ethelbert, acting upon his pretended right, as lord paramount, seized upon that kingdom. He soon after, however, thought proper, on perceiving the general dissatisfaction his conduct had excited, to restore his patrimony to Wibba, Cridda's son, or rather, as it would appear, to appoint the young man governor or lieutenant of what had been his father's dominions. Ethelbert married Bertha, daughter of Charibert, king of France ; and it was through means of this princess that Christianity was first introduced among the Anglo-Saxons. She would not consent to give her hand to Ethelbert until he had promised to allow her the free exercise of her own religion, and the liberty of bringing over with her for that purpose a certain number of ecclesiastics, and maintaining them in her household. But Bertha, who appears to have been a woman very superior to her age, had something more in view, when she stipulated for this arrangement, than merely the sustenance of her own faith : she hoped also to convert her heathen husband. Animated by this pious resolution, she spared no pains to acquire an ascendancy over the rude nature of Ethelbert, and soon succeeded by her virtues and her devotedness in attaching him to her by the most cordial esteem and affection. It is supposed that, having thus so far prepared the way, Bertha now applied to Pope Gregory I. to send over a mission to Britain. The missionaries, accordingly, consisting of forty Benedictine monks, headed by Austin, or Augustine, as abbot, arrived in the year 597, in the isle of Thanet, in the dominions of Ethelbert. That king, on the intercession of his wife, soon after permitted them to take up their residence in the city of Canterbury, his capital, and, in the course of about a year, consented to receive baptism at their hands. His conduct was imitated by large numbers of his subjects ; and from this time the new religion spread gradually over

all the other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. The monks, in a short time, began to build a cathedral at Canterbury, as well as other religious edifices in other parts; and eventually, as is well known, on the success which had attended the enterprize being made known to Gregory, Augustine was appointed archbishop of Canterbury and primate of England.

But to return to the succession of the Bretwaldas. Ethelbert, having died in 616, after a reign of fifty-two years, was succeeded by his son Eadbald, a prince lost in indolence and dissoluteness, who soon let his father's imperial sceptre drop from his hands. The dignity of which he had shown himself to be unworthy was, by unanimous consent, bestowed upon Redwald, king of East Anglia, grandson of Uffa, the founder of that monarchy, who had just raised himself to the highest distinction as a warrior by his defeat of Adelfrid, king of Northumbria. Adelfrid, who was the grandson of Ida, and originally king of Bernicia only, had in 588, on the death of Ella, king of Deira, whose daughter Acca he had married, taken possession of the throne of the latter principality also, and united the two states under the name of Northumbria, although Ella had left an infant son. This son, named Edwin, having escaped from the power of the usurper, wandered for a long time from one part of the country to another in quest of a secure place of retreat, till at last, about the year 615, he was generously received at the court of Redwald. Adelfrid, however, who, as we have mentioned above, had all along set at defiance even the otherwise universally acknowledged supremacy of Ethelbert, was of too arrogant and domineering a spirit to brook that his neighbour, the East Anglian king, should dare to shelter the man whom he wished to destroy; and it was not long before he sent a message to Redwald demanding the surrender of the fugitive. It is said that Redwald, naturally averse to expose his dominions to the ravages of a war, for some time hesitated, and felt half-inclined at least to dismiss Edwin from his court and kingdom, but at last the nobler feelings of his nature prevailed, and he resolved to dare the worst that might happen rather than commit an act of cruelty and inhospitality. He sent back Adelfrid's ambassadors, accordingly, with a flat refusal of their master's suit. At the same time, with admirable prudence and decision, he took his measures in conformity with the situation in which he had placed himself, and knowing the imperious temper of the king of Northumbria, and how certain it was that he would have immediately to experience his hostility, he determined to collect his own forces, and, placing himself at their head, to march at once against the enemy instead of waiting till he should be himself attacked. The consequence was, that a great battle took place near the river Idel, in Nottinghamshire, in which Adelfrid was slain, and his army completely put to flight. On this occasion one of the divisions of Redwald's forces was led on by his eldest son, Regner, who, having advanced with too great impetuosity, lost his life in the commencement of the battle. Another was commanded by Edwin, who also greatly distinguished himself, and was more fortunate in the meed which he reaped by his courage. With extraordinary generosity Redwald, though his conquest had cost him so dear, declined to appropriate any of its advantages, and not only reinstated Edwin on the throne of his father, but allowed him also to retain Adelfrid's kingdom

of Bernicia, which, under that usurper, had been so long united with Deira. Thus, from the condition of a friendless and homeless wanderer, to which he had been accustomed for so many years, was the son of king Ella suddenly elevated to a much greater height of dignity and power than that from which he had been cast down.

But the possession of the two thrones of Northumbria was not all that fortune had in store for Edwin. Redwald died in 624, and was succeeded in the kingdom of East Anglia by his son Eorpwald, who was, however, of far too feeble a character to be able to retain his father's dignity of Bretwalda. That supreme office was immediately seized upon by the king of Northumbria; and so powerful were his claims considered to be by his brother-sovereigns, that none of them ventured to offer him any opposition, except the two brothers Cynegils and Cuichelm, the sons of Ceolric, who then reigned conjointly in Wessex, and whose ambition inspired them to make an attempt to regain for themselves the dignity which had been held by their ancestor, Ceawlin. But in the contest which they waged for this purpose, they were completely defeated by Edwin, whose power was only the more consolidated by the proof to which it had thus been put. The new Bretwalda, indeed, soon began to manifest a determination to extend his authority far beyond the bounds within which his predecessors had been wont to confine themselves. It is said that he even compelled the Welsh to acknowledge his sovereignty and to pay him tribute; and as for the other Anglo-Saxon kings, he treated them rather as his vassals than as fellow-monarchs. The year after his assumption of the title of Bretwalda, he asked in marriage Ethelburga, the sister of Eadbald, king of Kent, and the daughter of Ethelbert and Bertha of France. Ethelburga, like her mother, was a zealous Christian, and the consequence of her marriage with Edwin was the speedy conversion both of that king and of the greater number of his subjects. After this, Edwin reigned for about eight years in undisturbed tranquillity; and so admirable was the order which he introduced into his dominions, that it is said a child might have run over Northumberland with a purse of gold in his hand without any risk of being robbed. Most of the other kings also seem, in fact, to have considered themselves as the dependents of the powerful sovereign of Northumbria. At last, however, in the year 633, Penda, king of Mercia, the son of Wibba, whom we have already mentioned, determined to take up arms, and to endeavour to free himself and his dominions from what he regarded as a state of disgraceful bondage. For this purpose he entered into a league with Cadwallader, king of Wales, who also felt deeply indignant at the tribute imposed upon his country by the Saxon monarch. The two allies accordingly having collected their forces, met those of Edwin, who were much fewer in number, at Hatfield, in Yorkshire, where a furious and bloody battle took place, in which both the king of Northumbria and his eldest son, Osfrid, were slain, and their army completely routed. The consequence was the reduction of Northumbria to the condition of a conquered province, and the elevation of Penda to the vacant dignity of Bretwalda. Thus terminated the eventful life of Edwin, in the forty-eighth year of his age. His only other surviving son, Eadfrid, was soon afterwards murdered by order of Penda; but his queen, Ethelburga, made her escape to the



dominions of her brother, the king of Kent, under whose protection she passed the rest of her days in a monastery.

Penda, however, did not long retain the supremacy which he had thus acquired. In the course of a few months, an unexpected opponent arose to dispute his claims, and to deliver Northumbria from his oppressive domination, in the person of Oswald, son of Adelfrid, who, on the death of his father, had fled with his two brothers, Anfrid and Oswy, to Scotland, and had been since hospitably entertained at the court of the northern monarch. As soon as Oswald raised his standard, the ancient subjects of his father crowded around him, and he was ere long in condition to attack the combined forces of Penda and Cadwallader. In a battle which was fought at Haledon, or as other authorities say, at Dilston, Oswald obtained a complete victory over his enemies, and Cadwallader himself was left dead on the field. The imperial sceptre of Britain was now transferred to the possessor of the two thrones of Bernicia and Deira, to both of which he was also entitled of right, as the heir of his father and of his uncle. For about eight years after this he reigned in great glory, being distinguished as much for his piety as for his power, and calling himself, according to Bede, sovereign lord not only of the English, but also of the Welsh, the Picts, and the Scots. So popular did he render himself by his liberality, that the Britons themselves are said to have bestowed upon him the appellation of Oswald of the Bounteous Hand. However, in 642, he was again suddenly attacked by his old enemy Penda; and in a great battle which was fought, as is generally supposed, at Oswestry, in Shropshire, he not only sustained a complete defeat, but lost his life. Penda, nevertheless, was not able to follow up his victory in such a manner as to wrest either the kingdom of Northumbria, or the dignity of Bretwalda, from the family of his rival. After a short time, Oswy, the brother of Oswald, was raised by the people to the vacant throne, and although he was not for some time acknowledged by his brother sovereigns as Bretwalda, he eventually obtained also that dignity on defeating Penda, in a battle fought at Leeds, in which that restless disturber, in the eightieth year of his age, at last lost both his crown and his life. Oswy had married Anflæda, the daughter and only surviving child of his predecessor Edwin; and on his death, in 670, he was succeeded by his eldest son, Egfrid, born of his lady. According to some accounts, Egfrid also enjoyed his father's place of Bretwalda; but if he ever was in possession of this title, it appears that he did not retain it long. The kingdom of Mercia was soon wrested from his hands by Wulfer, the son of Penda; and he was himself at last slain in battle, while carrying on a war against the Picts, in the fortieth year of his age and the fifteenth of his reign. After his death his subjects raised to the throne, Alfred, the natural son of his father Oswy; and from this time the kingdom of Northumbria never recovered its ancient lustre and influence. The throne, on almost every vacancy, became a prey to the leader of some one of the numerous factions that distracted the state; and, although the country maintained a nominal independence for considerably more than a century, under about fifteen successive monarchs, until it was finally extinguished by Egbert the Great, the remainder of its history presents little or nothing that is worth recording.

Wulfer of Mercia seems now to have assumed the supreme power, at least over that part of the island which lay to the south of the Humber. For a long time after this the contest for the authority of Bretwalda would appear to have been waged principally between the two kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex, fortune inclining sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other. Among the sovereigns of the latter kingdom, one of the most valorous was Ina, who is said to have obtained such decided advantages over Ceolred, king of Mercia, that he was unanimously acknowledged as Bretwalda by his brother-princes. Ina, however, at last, about the year 727, thought proper to relinquish his diadem for the cowl of a monk; and upon this event, Ethelbald, the successor of Ceolred, was declared supreme monarch. But in 757, Ethelbald was defeated by Cuthred, king of Wessex, and was soon after murdered. His throne was at first usurped by Beornred the tyrant, as he was denominated; but in the course of a few months the people raised to the throne one of the noblemen, named Offa, a descendant of their ancient king Wibba, the son of Crida, the founder of the monarchy. Offa, named by his enemies Offa the terrible, turned out a great warrior, and soon made himself one of the most powerful monarchs that had ever reigned in England. He attacked the Welsh with so much skill and valour as ere long to reduce them to complete subjection. He may be almost said to have effected the entire conquest of the kingdom of Kent—which indeed had never again risen to any importance since the days of Ethelbert—by a victory which he gained over its king Aldric. The kingdom of Essex, also,—of which by the bye the history has been more imperfectly preserved than that of any of the other states, and which seems never to have played any other than a very subordinate part—appears to have submitted itself to his authority. London is expressly stated to have become part of his dominions. Of East Anglia, which had made no figure since the death of Redwald, he made himself master by an act of the foulest treachery, having at the instigation of his queen, Cynedrida, ordered Ethelbert, the young king of that state, to be murdered, after having received him at his court with every show of hospitality, when he came as a suitor for the hand of his daughter, Etheldrida. Immediately after the perpetration of this atrocious deed, he marched an army into East Anglia, and easily effected its subjugation. Wessex, also, which had so long been the rival of Mercia, Offa succeeded in effectually keeping in check; and the better to maintain his ascendancy, he gave his daughter Eadburga, a woman animated with all his own unscrupulous ambition, in marriage to Brithric, the sovereign of that kingdom. Having thus widely extended his influence in his dominions, he summoned a great council of his prelates and nobles, and with their concurrence assumed his son Egfrith as the associate of his throne. Offa, who held his court at Tamworth, was a friend and correspondent of the famous Charlemagne; and several letters which passed between the two emperors are still preserved, from which it appears that the latter regarded the former as holding the same supremacy in the west of Christendom which he claimed for himself in the east.

On the death of Offa in 796, he was succeeded by his son Egfrid, both in the possession of the united kingdoms of Mercia and East Anglia, and in the sovereignty of England. Egfrid, however, reigned

only a few months, and was succeeded the same year by his nearest relation, Cenulph, a descendant from a younger son of Wibba. Cenulph proved himself a warlike and able monarch, and in the course of a reign of twenty four years, added to the dominions of his ancestors the kingdom of Kent, the conquest of which, however, may be said to have been already effected in every thing but in name and form by Offa. But on the death of Cenulph in 819, the imperial sceptre was destined to pass from the occupant of the throne of Mercia, into the hands of one better fitted, if not by nature, at least by education and by circumstances, than any of his predecessors, to turn to account the advantageous position in which he was thus placed. This was the young Egbert, king of Wessex, whose reign forms so memorable an epoch in the history of his country. The five immediate successors of Ina in the throne of Essex, all belonged to a younger branch of the posterity of Cenric. Of these, the last was Brithric, who married Eadburga the daughter of Offa. The line, however, of Keaulin, the eldest son of Cenric, was still unextinguished; and, as its representative, Egbert was the true heir to the throne. Even during the lifetime of Brithric, this prince, who it appears had been permitted to remain in the kingdom, had so much ingratiated himself with the people of Wessex as to have occasioned considerable jealousy in the breast of the reigning sovereign. Fearing the consequences, Egbert fled in the first instance to the court of the king of Mercia; but Brithric having immediately requested Offa to deliver him up, he made his escape to France. Here the royal fugitive was very graciously received by the emperor Charlemagne; and at his court he remained till the death of Brithric, who, about the year 800, was poisoned by his profligate queen. The history of this woman, we may remark by the bye, is one of the romances of real life. The daughter of one of the most powerful monarchs of that time, she was brought up in the bosom of luxury and indulgence; she then for a considerable number of years occupied a throne herself; from this high estate she precipitated herself by the crime we have mentioned; on her guilt being detected she fled from the indignation of the people to the court of her father's friend, the emperor of France; Charlemagne, from regard to Offa, not only sheltered her, but placed her in a rich abbey as its abbess; but even in this quiet retreat her conduct was so depraved that after a short time it was found necessary to dismiss her; and she spent her last days a beggar in the streets of Pavia! To return, however, to Egbert: immediately on the death of Brithric, the West Saxons resolved to offer the crown to the legitimate heir of their ancient princes, and Egbert, accordingly, being recalled, mounted the throne. It would seem that from the very commencement of his reign this politic prince, whose natural abilities had no doubt received a better education at the French court than they could have had at home, devoted himself to making preparations for the great design which he eventually executed. He was, it is said, especially assiduous in training his subjects to the use of arms, initiating them probably in various new evolutions and lessons of military skill which he had learned abroad. The first warlike measures, however, in which he actually engaged were directed not against any of his Saxon neighbours, but against the Britons of Cornwall. These he very soon subdued, and added the district which they



inhabited to his hereditary dominions. It was probably this important conquest which on the death of Cenulph of Mercia, who left only an infant son, was conceived to point out Egbert as the natural inheritor of the dignity of Bretwalda. He accordingly assumed that high office; none of his brother-potentates presuming to oppose his pretensions. But he was far from intending to hold the supreme power merely as an empty honour. He had resolved to be king of England in reality as well as in name.

After the throne of Mercia had been filled first by Cenelm, the young son of Cenulph, who was assassinated by his elder sister Quendrida, and then by Ceolulph, the brother of Cenulph, who reigned only about a year, it was mounted by Bernulph, one of the nobility, the head of the faction by whom his predecessor had been deposed. The distractions occasioned by this usurpation, and the unfortunate events which had led to it, so much weakened that lately powerful state, that the watchful observation of the king of Wessex soon determined him to strike his first blow for the empire of his country by an attack on Mercia. He had, however, the art, even while carrying this resolution into effect, to escape the odium of seeming to be the assailant. The mere preparations which he made, and the rumours of his intentions which he caused to be spread abroad, awakened to such a degree the apprehensions and the rage of Bernulph, that that prince deemed it best, instead of waiting the threatened attack, to advance at once against his enemy. The two armies met near Salisbury, and the Mercians were defeated with immense slaughter. This victory paved the way to the rapid conquest of the various possessions of Bernulph, which indeed, consisting as they did in great part of dissatisfied dependencies, formed together but an ill-cemented and precarious dominion. The whole of Kent was wrested from the Mercian sovereignty and annexed to Wessex by the result of a single battle. About this time also Egbert seems to have taken possession of the kingdom of Essex, which probably was in no condition to offer him even the feeblest resistance. The only states therefore that now retained their independence were those of Northumberland and Mercia,—the former comprising the united kingdoms of Deira and Bernicia, the latter having under it the conquered realm of East Anglia. But both were torn by divisions, originating in the same cause,—the failure or displacement of the ancient royal line, and the consequent struggles, repeated on the death of almost every sovereign, among the various competitors for the vacant throne. Mercia was still farther weakened by the nature of its connection with East Anglia, which rather endured its yoke than formed an incorporated part of its territory. Egbert took advantage of this state of things first by secretly encouraging the East Angles to revolt, and then by openly joining them in the war of liberty which he had thus persuaded them to wage. The power of Bernulph was quite unable to stand against this combination. In an engagement with his revolted tributaries his forces were defeated, and he himself left dead on the field. The war, however, was not at once terminated by this event. The Mercians chose another king; and, after losing him also, a second, who for some time attempted to make head against the victorious ruler of Wessex. But the force with which they had to contend was too over-

whelming to be either subdued or beaten back by all their efforts. After some farther fighting Egbert made himself completely master of the kingdom, which, together with that of East Anglia, he immediately annexed to his own, merely permitting Witglaph, the reigning king, on the solicitation of Siward, abbot of Croyland, to retain his nominal sovereignty during his life, on condition of doing homage and paying tribute to his conqueror.<sup>10</sup> After all this the conquest of Northumberland happened almost as a matter of course. Indeed the king Andred, on Egbert advancing into his country, did not even attempt to make any resistance, but at once submitted to his fate, and consented, like his neighbour the king of Mercia, to swear allegiance to Egbert as his sovereign lord.<sup>11</sup> The conquests of Egbert were completed about the year 827; from which period, accordingly, his reign as king of England is commonly dated.

We have entered with the more minuteness into the detail of the great events which wind up the history of what is usually called the Saxon Heptarchy, because this is really the most interesting passage of our ancient annals at which we have yet arrived. With the Britons, or original inhabitants of the island, we feel that we have little more to do than with any other savages in a similar state of barbarism. Their blood is in the veins of comparatively few of us. The Romans during the whole period of their residence in the country remained essentially foreigners, and left little behind them to prove that they had ever trod upon our soil. But the Saxons were the fathers both of our lineage and our language, as well as of all the more deep-rooted among the national institutions and social customs that still subsist among us. The present population, both of England, exclusive of Wales, and of Scotland, exclusive of the Highlands, is mainly Anglo-Saxon, the produce of that offshoot of the great Gothic family, which, although somewhat rudely transplanted hither, has eventually taken far deeper root and spread far wider than any of the older natives of the clime. It was the Saxons who first built up and sustained among us the blessing of a regular domestic government—who, in other words, first made England a nation. We may well therefore dwell with some interest on the events and circumstances which brought about the final consolidation, under the single sway of Egbert the Great, of that fabric of polity which, during some previous centuries, had been rising as it were in so many separate parts in the different states which he eventually united. In taking leave of the Heptarchy we may merely make two farther observations; first, that in some of the states, and especially in Mercia and East Anglia, the succession of tributary kings or viceroys seems to have continued at least to the close of the ninth century; and secondly, that traces of the original division of England under the Saxons may even now be detected both in our local customs and in some of our laws—as for instance, in the usage of *Gavel-kind*, or the equal division of landed property among all the sons, which prevails in Kent, having been the ancient British law, which, in that first acquired province, the Saxon law of primogeniture never supplanted. To the same circumstance, namely, its having been made over to the Saxons rather than taken by them from the Britons by force of arms, Kent owes in all probability the other distinction of being the only district of the kingdom

<sup>10</sup> Ingulf. 7, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Chron. Sax. 71.

which was allowed to retain, and still retains, its ancient British name. Kent is the British word *cyn*, signifying head; and the name seems to have been given to the south-east corner of the island as being the first part which presented itself to those sailing to the country from Gaul.

Egbert, successful as he had been in subduing his own countrymen, had not possessed the sovereignty of England many years, when his dominions were invaded by a new enemy, whom he and his successors found it somewhat more difficult to cope with. This was the formidable confederacy of pirates and plunderers whom our historians have commonly called the Danes, although they in truth proceeded from the regions of the north generally, and were therefore more accurately described by the Franks when they designated those of them who infested their coasts, *Normans*, or Northmen. The Danes, in fact, who now began to direct their attacks against England, were both of the same profession and of the same race with the ancestors of the English Saxons themselves, or the piratical hordes who some centuries before had begun by ravaging the maritime parts of the country when it was in possession of the Romans and the Britons, and had eventually succeeded in establishing their dominion over its whole extent. Had the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles, who settled in England, retained their original mode of life, instead of conquering that country and becoming Christians, they would themselves have been among those Danes with whom they were now to hold so long and bitter a strife. The first descent which the Danes made on the English coast is recorded to have taken place in 789 at Portland, in the kingdom of Wessex, during the reign of Brithric. The next time they landed was in the year 832, when they laid waste the isle of Shepey near the mouth of the Thames. The next year they made their appearance again off the coast of Dorset in thirty-five vessels, and, having landed at Charmouth, plundered a great part of the surrounding country. Egbert upon this went forth to meet them with a considerable body of troops; but, greatly to his mortification, he suffered a complete defeat from the hardy foreigners, who returned, however, to their ships after their victory, although meaning no doubt to come back when they should have reinforced their numbers. Two years afterwards, accordingly, a body of them landed again in Cornwall. Here they were joined by many of the Britons; but, undismayed either by their numbers or by his former disaster, Egbert once more went boldly forth to meet them, and this time was fortunate enough to put them to flight with great slaughter. This victory delivered England from the Danes during the remainder of the reign of Egbert, who died in 838, leaving his dominions to his only surviving son Ethelwulf.

Ethelwulf, having had an elder brother who it was expected would inherit the throne, had been educated for the church, and, according to some authorities, had even been consecrated bishop of Winchester, before the failure of other heirs called upon him to receive his father's sceptre. He was a peaceable and rather slothful prince; and the Danes took full advantage of his mild and unwarlike disposition to renew their ravages. They now indeed began to visit some part of England pretty regularly once every year; and from these expeditions they rarely failed to return home loaded with booty. On some occasions, also, if we may trust the English historians, they committed the most terrible cruelties.



butchering immense numbers of the inhabitants, without regard to age or sex. Ethelwulf and his generals fought several battles with them ; but the English were generally worsted. Meanwhile, to relieve himself in part from the cares and toils of government, to which he was but little suited either by capacity or inclination, Ethelwulf, about the year 841, resigned a part of his dominions, consisting of Kent, Essex, and Sussex, to Athelstan, whom some authorities call his legitimate, others his natural son, and others his brother. Athelstan reigned conjointly with his father till the year 852, when he was slain in a great battle fought with the Danes at Okeley in Surrey, in which, however, the English were victorious. Ethelwulf now resumed the entire sovereignty, refusing for a long time to share it with his eldest son Ethelbald, who was of a restless and ambitious character, and, now that Athelstan was dead, was importunate to be allowed to take his place. At last, however, the father, whose mind had of late been turned very much to devotion, terrified by the apprehension of a civil war which his son's intrigues threatened to excite, yielded him by treaty, not the inferior place of king of Kent, but—keeping that to himself—the throne of Wessex and the sovereignty of England. This arrangement was made in 855 ; and two years after, Ethelwulf died, leaving besides Ethelbald three younger sons, Ethelbert, Ethelred, and Alfred, to the first of whom he bequeathed the kingdom of Kent. Ethelwulf, accompanied by his son Alfred, had paid a visit to Rome in the year 855, and, returning home through France, had married Judith the daughter of Charles the Bald, the reigning king of that country ; but all his children were born of his first wife Osburga, the daughter of Oslac, his cupbearer, a West Saxon nobleman of illustrious descent. Ethelbald lived about two years and a half after the death of his father ; and on his decease in 860 the whole of England again became one kingdom, under the sovereignty of Ethelbert.

Immediately after Ethelbert's accession, the Danes—who had not been heard of for eight years—again made their appearance on the southern coast, and having effected a landing, committed great devastations. From this time till the close of the present reign, the English were engaged in an almost incessant contest with these foreign marauders. Ethelbert died in 866, after a reign of six years, and was succeeded, according to the will of his father, by his next brother Ethelred, who occupied the throne for a period of much about the same length. His short reign, however, was the most disastrous which England had ever known since it was in possession of the Saxons. The repeated incursions of the Danes had so greatly shattered the royal authority, even when Ethelred first mounted the throne, that the inhabitants of the remote district of Northumberland, still remembering their old independence, resolved to make an attempt to free themselves from the yoke which had been imposed upon them by Egbert, and succeeded so far as actually again to place a king of their own selection upon the throne. Beset as he was with foreign enemies, Ethelred was obliged to submit to this revolt against his authority, without even making an attempt to punish or to repress it. The consequences, however, were more dreadful than he had foreseen, both to him and to its authors. It happened that Osbert, the person whom the Northumbrians had chosen for their king, as he was one day returning from hunting, called at the

castle of one of his noblemen, the earl Bruern-Brocard, with the beauty of whose wife he was so captivated, that in the absence of her husband, he compelled her by force to submit to his lawless passion: the earl, on learning this cruel injury, swore that he would be revenged, and kept his oath. The atrocity which Osbert had perpetrated was well-calculated to alienate from him the affections of his subjects; and it was not long before the earl succeeded in getting the Bernicians openly to cast off his authority and to choose themselves another sovereign. Nor was this all. A contest commenced immediately between Osbert and his rival Ella, which was carried on for some time with such doubtful success, that at length the latter, instigated by the earl, adopted the fatal resolution of calling in the Danes to his assistance. These bold rovers, whose trade was war, willingly accepted the invitation. A numerous fleet of them entered the Humber, under the command of the two brothers, Hinguar and Hubba—the former of whom, our historians call the king of the nation—and, conducted by Bruern, landed in the territory of Northumberland.<sup>12</sup> This was the commencement of an enterprize which terminated in the actual conquest of a great part of England by these fierce barbarians. All Northumberland was soon subdued and taken possession of by the foreigners, who paid no more respect to the territory of Ella than they did to that of Osbert. Indeed Ella himself lost his life in fighting against them in the great battle of Ellescroft, in which his army was entirely routed. From this time the invaders bore down all opposition; and having first made themselves masters of East Anglia notwithstanding all the efforts that Ethelred could make to stop their progress, they boldly proceeded to attack the king in Wessex itself. It was in vain that Ethelred, assisted by his brother Alfred, made the most heroic exertions to save his hereditary dominions. In the course of one year it is said that he fought nine battles with his assailants; in the last of these, which took place near Whittingham in the year 872, he was mortally wounded, and left the name of king rather than the real possession of a kingdom to his younger brother and companion in arms, Alfred, the incidents of whose life we are now to relate.

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## I. POLITICAL SERIES.

### Alfred.

BORN A. D. 849.—DIED A. D. 901.

ALFRED THE GREAT was born in the year 849, at Wantage in Berkshire. He is described to have been from his infancy his father's favourite; and when he was only in his fifth year Ethelwulf sent him, attended by a splendid train of nobility and others, to Rome, where it is said he was, according to the custom of those times, adopted by the reigning pontiff, Leo IV. as his son, and also, young as he was,

<sup>12</sup> See Turner, vol. ii. 107.

anointed as a king.<sup>1</sup> A few years after this, he again visited the imperial city accompanied by his father himself; and this time his opening faculties may be supposed to have received many impressions from a scene so unlike any thing he could have witnessed at home, which would prove indelible, and materially influence his future character and conduct. His father died when he was in his eleventh year; and he appears to have lost his mother some years before. He was now, therefore, left to the charge of his step-mother, Judith, a daughter of the king of France, who seems, however, to have acquitted herself admirably of the duty which had thus devolved on her.

The only species of literature of which our future royal author yet knew any thing, was the unwritten ballad poetry of his country, to which, as recited by his attendants and playmates, he had from his earliest years loved to listen. But the influence even of such intellectual sustenance as this in awakening both his patriotism and his genius, will not be thought lightly of by any who have accustomed themselves to trace the causes by which generous spirits have been frequently matured to greatness. The body is not fed and strengthened by bread alone;—so neither is the mind only by that sort of knowledge which is conversant but with the literalities of things. The prejudice of a certain philosophism against whatever appeals to the imaginative part of our nature is no wiser than would be a feeling of contempt on the part of a blind man for those who see. True, imagination has its tendencies to evil, as well as to good. And there are also temptations which beset the man who sees, from which he who is blind is exempted. And, universally, in this condition of things, whatsoever may be turned to good may be turned also to evil, and nothing is wholly and irretrievably either the one or the other. But it is the high office of philosophy to be ever so mixing up and combining the elements of power that are in us and around us, as to turn them all to good; none of them were given us to be either lost or destroyed; least of all were our imaginative tastes and faculties—which are the very wings of the mind, whereby it lifts itself to the upper regions of philosophy—made part and parcel of our being, only that they might be stunted in their growth, or left to perish. They were bestowed upon us undoubtedly, like all the rest of our nature, to be *educated*, that is to say, to have their potency changed from tyrannizing over us, to serving under us, even as the fire, and the water, and the beasts of the field, which also all aspire to be our masters, are converted by art into our most useful ministers and subjects, and made, as it were, to come and lay down their strength at our feet. Our business is to seek not to destroy our imagination, but to obtain the rule over it,—not to weaken, but to direct, its force. He whose imagination is his lord, is a madman; but he, on the other hand, is armed with the mightiest of all moral powers, whose imagination is his wielded and obedient instrument. It was fortunate, we must therefore hold, for Alfred to have had his sensibilities thus early kindled to the love of poetry. This was excitement enough to keep his intellectual faculties from wasting away, during the protracted period when he was yet without

<sup>1</sup> Asser, 7.—Chron. Sax. 77.—Lingard supposes that Alfred was made to receive regal unction in order to secure his succession to the crown, after his brothers, to the exclusion of their children.



the elements of any other education. And who shall say how much, not of the enjoyment merely, but even of the greatness, of his future life was the offspring of that imaginative culture of his youth, which, as it must have smitten his spirit with its first love of heroic deeds, so would often supply it afterwards with its best strength for their performance. He himself at least retained ever after the deepest regard and reverence for that simple lore which had thus been the light and solace of his otherwise illiterate boyhood. Many of his compositions which have come down to us are in verse, and we are told by his friend and biographer, Asser, that not only was the poetry of his native land his own favourite reading, but that, in directing the education of his children, it was to Saxon books, and especially to Saxon poetry, that he ordered their hours of study to be devoted. The indulgence of his parents was probably, in part at least, the cause of his long ignorance of book-learning. But, however this may be, he had reached his twelfth year, Asser tells us,<sup>2</sup> without knowing his letters, when one day his mother showed him and his brothers, a small volume somewhat gaily illuminated, and announced that the book should be the prize of him who should first learn to read it. Alfred immediately put himself into the hands of a teacher, and, although the youngest of the competitors, was in no long time able to claim the promised reward. From this period he continued to be throughout his life so ardent and devoted a reader, that, even when most oppressed with occupation, he was rarely to be found, if he had the shortest interval of repose, without a book in his hand.

Up to the time when Ethelred mounted the throne, as related in the preceding historical sketch, Alfred had never succeeded in obtaining from his brothers the property to which he was entitled by his father's will; and, owing to this cause, he seems to have been unable to provide himself either with books or instructors even in the few branches of science and of more refined scholarship which were then cultivated. There is some reason to believe that, in the recklessness produced by the untoward circumstances in which he was thus placed, his noble energies had already threatened to lose themselves in a career of dissipation and profligacy. But both his years at this time, and the steady virtues of his manhood, forbid us to suppose that he could have proceeded very far in such a course. Even after Ethelred became king, he still continued to be deprived of the independent provision which had been bequeathed to him, his brother, who, before his accession, had promised to see him restored to his rights, now excusing himself from performing his intention on the ground of the troubled state of the kingdom, harassed as it was almost continually by those Danish pirates, who had first appeared on its coasts in the reign of Egbert, but had for some years past been in the habit of making their descents in such augmented force as to dispute the possession of the country with its natural occupants. From this date, however, he seems to have been brought forth from the obscurity in which he had hitherto lived; and his brother's estimate of his talents, indeed, is said to have been so great, that he employed him both as his principal adviser or minister in the general government of the realm, and as the com-

<sup>2</sup> Men. p. 16.—This must have happened at an earlier period of Alfred's boyhood, for the anecdote is told of his own mother Osburga, and not of his step-mother Judith.

mander-in-chief of his armies. In this latter capacity he repeatedly encountered the Danes with various success. At last he allowed himself to be drawn into an engagement with them as they were collected in formidable numbers near Reading; the issue of which threatened to be a total defeat of the English, when a fresh force arrived under the command of the king himself, and so entirely turned the fortune of the day, that the Danes were completely routed with the loss of many of their chiefs. Their disaster, however, was far from driving the invaders from the country; on the contrary, they boldly attacked the two brothers about a fortnight after, and beat them; and this success they followed up without loss of time by another attack, which terminated in a second victory; and in which, as already related, king Ethelred was mortally wounded. The crown, therefore, now fell to Alfred, by whom, however, his original biographer assures us, it was assumed with reluctance. The jewelled circlet, always lined with cares, had almost in this case, indeed, to be won before it could be worn.

Scarcely had Alfred laid his brother in the grave when he was again forced to meet the enemy at Wilton. The consequence was a third defeat. It was followed by a treaty, which, however, the Danes, rendered audacious by the consciousness of their strength, are asserted to have regarded just as far as it suited their inclinations or convenience.<sup>3</sup> In the course of a few years Alfred found it necessary again to have recourse to arms; and he now resolved to meet the invaders on their own element, the sea. He accordingly fitted out a fleet, which soon afterwards attacked a squadron of five Danish ships, and took one of them. The foreigners, however, still maintained their position in the country in formidable numbers, quartering, plundering, and laying waste wherever they chose. Finding himself not strong enough to offer them battle, Alfred was obliged in 875 to make a new peace with them, or rather indeed to buy a cessation of hostilities. But the very next year he was forced to renew the war, which, with desperate vigour, he now pushed at once both by sea and land. Collecting all the forces he could, he shut up the army of the enemy in the town of Exeter; but he was saved the risk of actually giving them battle, by the good fortune of his little navy, which in the meantime attacked their fleet, consisting of a hundred and twenty sail; and, aided by a storm which immediately succeeded the conflict, sunk part of the vessels, and drove the rest on shore, so that scarcely a man escaped. Another peace followed this glorious achievement, the enemy being obliged to give hostages. The very year following, however, they suddenly sprung up again in arms; and such was the consternation everywhere spread by this unexpected return of a scourge which now seemed altogether invincible, that utter despair took possession of the heart of the nation; and, while many concealed themselves, or fled from the country, and others submitted to the invaders, none could be found to go forth and make head against them. The kingdom in fact might be said to be conquered. The king himself was obliged to leave his palace, and to take refuge in disguise with one of the keepers of his cattle. It was while he resided in this man's hut that an incident happened with which all our readers are probably fa-

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. 82, 83.

miliar: The scolding he one day received from the neatherd's wife—to whom his quality was unknown—for having, while engaged in trimming his bow and arrows, allowed some cakes to burn which she had appointed him in her absence to watch while toasting. The angry dame told him that it would have been but fair that he had attended to her cakes a little more, as he was generally ready enough to eat them.<sup>4</sup>

Even while in this retreat, however, Alfred probably kept up a correspondence with some of his friends; and, after a short time, he collected his family and a small body of faithful adherents, and took up his residence along with them in the little island of Athelney in Somersetshire, formed by the inclosing waters of the Parret and the Thone. On this marshy spot he built a fort, which was from its situation almost impregnable, and from which he frequently sallied forth against the enemy at the head of his few but brave followers with no inconsiderable success.<sup>5</sup> One day, some of the old histories tell us, he had been left alone in this fort with his queen, and was, as usual, engaged in reading, when he was roused from his book by the voice of a poor man asking alms. He desired the queen to see what store of provision they had in the house; thereupon, opening the cupboard, she told him there was but one small loaf. He directed her, nevertheless, to give the half of it to the poor man, and expressed his trust that God would soon send them more. It is said that when this had been done he read for some time longer, and then both he and the queen fell asleep. When he awakened, the king called to his consort, and told her that he had dreamed he had seen St Cuthbert, who had informed him that God had at last determined to restore him to his throne, and that in token of the truth of the vision his servants, who had been sent out to seek supplies, would soon be back with a large quantity of fish. Her majesty declared that she had had exactly the same dream; and in a few moments part of the prophecy was confirmed by the return of the servants overloaded with the produce of their nets. A portion of this story is probably the manufacture of the monks; but the fancy is unwilling to part with the belief that there may be truth at least in the incident of the divided loaf, if not in that of the double dream. Alfred had been nearly a year in Athelney when news was brought to him of a great victory which had been obtained over the Danes by a body of his subjects led by the earl of Devonshire. The general of the enemy, with many of their other captains, had been slain, and their celebrated magical standard, called the Raven, which was believed to have the power of predicting the issue of the battle in which it was carried, had fallen into the hands of the victors. On receiving this intelligence Alfred immediately prepared to place himself once more at the head of his people, now that they had re-

<sup>4</sup> Malm. de Reg. 23.—This incident was soon sung in Latin verse:—

Urere quos cernis panes, gyrare moraris,  
Cum nimium gaudes hos manducare calentes.

<sup>5</sup> Asser.—Palgrave, (Hist. vol. i. p. 129.) notices the curious fact of an ornament, which appears to have belonged to Alfred, having been found at Athelney, entire and undefaced, in the 17th century. It is made of gold and enamel, and was probably fastened to a necklace. The inscription which surrounds it, ALFRED HET MEH GEWI-REAN—i. e. Alfred caused me to be (worked) made—affords fair testimony of its origin. It is now preserved in the Ashmolean museum at Oxford.



awakened to a sense of their duty to themselves, and of the necessity of shaking off the yoke of their foreign oppressors. Having issued letters to his nobility informing them where he was, and inviting them to come to him, he laid before them a proposal for a general attack upon the enemy, which was eagerly agreed to. The better, however, to ascertain their position and their strength, he determined first to adopt an extraordinary expedient; and having put on the disguise of a harper, actually, it is said, introduced himself in that character into the camp, and was admitted to give a sample of his musical skill in the presence of their princes.<sup>6</sup> The appearance of the English army close upon the unsuspecting Danes soon followed this adventure of Alfred. A battle ensued at Eddington in Wiltshire, which ended in the complete defeat of the foreigners. The English monarch, however, on their giving hostages and consenting to embrace Christianity, treated them with great generosity, and even assigned them the whole kingdom of East Anglia—including the counties of Cambridge, Suffolk, and Norfolk—for their habitation.

No further annoyance was now received from this quarter till the year 884, when a numerous swarm of these northern pirates landed in Kent, and laid siege to Rochester. Alfred, however, attacked them, and forced them to raise the siege, and to fly from the country. In a battle at sea, also, which occurred shortly after, his fleet destroyed thirteen of their ships. There was now peace again for some years. But at last two large Danish fleets made their appearance nearly at the same time, the one consisting of two hundred and fifty sail on the coast of Kent, the other in the Thames. The crews of both effected a landing before they could be opposed, and fixed themselves severally at Appletree and at Middleton. The arrival of these new hordes was the signal for the revolt of large numbers of their countrymen who were settled in different parts of the kingdom, so that the situation of Alfred seemed now more perilous than ever. He prepared, however, to face the crisis with his characteristic boldness, skill, and activity. Various battles ensued, at Farnham in Surrey, at Exeter, and elsewhere, in all of which the English, led by their heroic monarch, were victorious. The Danes, however, were still far from being subdued, being in fact no sooner repulsed in one part of the country than they carried their devastations into another. A powerful band of them having come up the Thames, landed about twenty miles from London, and there built a fort. From this stronghold, however, Alfred drove them by cutting certain trenches which left their ships dry, and then burning and destroying such of them as could not be got off. This and other successes at last reduced these barbarians again to subjection and quiet, after the war had continued for about three years, during a considerable portion of which time the miseries of famine and plague followed every where the ravages of the sword. A maritime engagement on the coast of Devonshire, in which five out of six ships of the enemy were sunk or driven on shore, concluded the triumphs of the English arms. The few remaining years of Alfred's reign were spent in tranquillity, of which he took advantage to repair the many mischiefs and disorders which so long a season of turbulence had intro-

<sup>6</sup> Ingulf. p. 26.—This relation is not in Asser or Ethelwerd.

duced, and to establish such institutions as might secure the future prosperity of the kingdom.

It is generally allowed that Englishmen are indebted to this illustrious monarch, if not for the contrivance and first introduction, at any rate for the restoration and improvement, of several of their most valuable still existing safeguards of liberty and order. He did not indeed establish a representative government; but he ordered that the great council of the nation—the only species of legislative assembly suitable to the circumstances of the country in that age—should meet at least twice every year, thus providing a parliamentary, if not a popular check of considerable importance upon his own authority and that of his successors. The general application of trial by jury to civil and criminal cases is also thought to be due to Alfred.<sup>7</sup> The common law is supposed to be founded principally on the regulations for the punishment of offences and the dispensing of justice which he promulgated. He settled the boundaries of the parishes, hundreds, and counties into which England still continues to be divided, and accomplished a survey of the whole, the results of which he caused to be recorded in what was called the Book of Winchester, the foundation of the famous Domesday Book, compiled two centuries afterwards by the Conqueror.<sup>8</sup> By an ingeniously arranged system of police also, he placed every man in his dominions as it were under his eye, so that it is said offences against property and the public peace became eventually almost unknown, and the king was wont, by way of putting the sovereignty of the laws to the proof, even to expose articles of gold on the highways without any one daring to touch them.<sup>9</sup> He founded new towns in different parts of the kingdom, and restored many of the old ones which had fallen into decay. London especially, which, when he came to the throne, was in the possession of the Danes, he rebuilt, extended, and chose as his principal residence and the seat of government. To Alfred, likewise, England is indebted for the beginning of her naval greatness,—that arm of her national power which is at once the strongest for good and the weakest for evil.

Nor did this wise and patriotic king neglect the civilization any more than the defence and political independence of his country. He not only established schools for elementary instruction in most of the different great towns, but spared no pains or cost to bring back and re-establish among his people that higher learning which the recent distractions had almost entirely banished. He was, according to some accounts, the founder of the university of Oxford;<sup>10</sup> and it seems probable that he fixed and endowed a seminary of some description or other on the site afterwards occupied by this famous seat of education. So utterly had literature been extirpated from the land, that any one almost but Alfred would have looked upon the attempt to restore it as an altogether hopeless and impossible enterprise. The very few learned men—they do not appear to have been above three or four in number

<sup>7</sup> See Spelman's *Life of Alfred*, p. 106.—Wilk. LL. Sax.

<sup>8</sup> Leg. Edv. in præf. et cap. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Malm. de Reg. II. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Asser, 52.—Spelman, 152.—Rossi Hist. Reg. Angl.—The passage in Asser is, however, thought to be spurious; and in Whitaker's *Life of St Neot* the reader will find a strong array of arguments against the probability of Alfred having founded any university at Oxford.

—who had survived the confusions and miseries to which the kingdom had so long been a prey, remained concealed and unheard of in remote religious retirements, which, naturally distrustful of the new-born and as yet unconfirmed tranquillity, hardly any temptation could prevail upon them to leave. Alfred, nevertheless, left no efforts untried to attract to his court these depositories of the light; and his biographer, Asser, who was himself one of those whom he thus brought around him, has given us some very curious and illustrative details of the manner in which he was sought out and tempted from his monastery among the mountains of Wales by the good king.<sup>11</sup> It was under the tuition of Asser that Alfred first carried his own acquaintance with literature beyond the knowledge of his mother-tongue, and engaged in the study of Latin. He had already reached his thirty-ninth year; but the time he had lost only spurred him to more zealous exertion, and he soon made such proficiency as to be able to read that language with ease. In his ardent and philanthropic mind, however, his new acquisition was not long permitted to remain a source of merely selfish gratification. He resolved that his people should have their share in his own advantages, and with this view he immediately set about the translation for public use of several of the works by which he had himself been most delighted, or which he conceived most likely to be generally serviceable.<sup>12</sup>

The first work which he undertook appears to have been the *Liber Pastoralis Curæ* of Pope Gregory, a treatise on ecclesiastical discipline, which he intended as a directory for the clergy. In an introductory address, in the form of an epistle to the bishop of London, which he prefixed to his translation of this performance, he states that when he began his reign there was not, so far as he knew, one priest to the south of the Thames who understood the prayers of the common church service, or could in fact translate a sentence of Latin into English. After this he either wrote or translated himself, or caused to be translated, so many books, that we may consider him as not only having laid the foundations of a literature for his country, but as having carried the superstructure to no ordinary height and extent.<sup>13</sup> Among his other versions from the Latin is one of Boethius's "Consolations of Philosophy," which is in many respects rather an original work than a translation, the author's text being often expanded, or for a time entirely departed from, in order that he may introduce new ideas and illustrations of his own, many of which are in the highest degree interesting from their reference to the circumstances of his age, his country, and even of his personal history. In his version, in like manner, of Orosius's Ancient History and Geography, he inserts from his own pen a sketch of the German nations, as well as an account of a voyage towards the North Pole made by a Norwegian navigator, from whom he had himself received the details.<sup>14</sup> His greatest work is his translation of Bede's Ec-

<sup>11</sup> Among the learned men whom Alfred thus drew around him were Plegmund archbishop of Canterbury, Grimbold of St Omers, John of Saxony, and Joannes Scotus Erigena.

<sup>12</sup> "I have often wondered," says he, "that the illustrious scholars who had once flourished among the English, and who had read so many foreign works, never thought of transferring the most useful into their own language." Præf. ad Past. p. 84.

<sup>13</sup> See Bale's catalogue of Alfred's works, original and translated, in Cent. II. cap. 22.

<sup>14</sup> Hakluyt, vol. I. p. 235.



clesiastical History, a truly splendid monument of his literary zeal and industry. A greater still would have been the complete version of the Scriptures, which some writers say he executed; but it is by no means clearly ascertained that he really translated the whole Bible, or even any considerable portion of it.<sup>15</sup>

We may well wonder how the necessary leisure for all these literary exertions could be found by a monarch who, in the course of not a very long life, is recorded to have fought fifty six battles; and who, even when no longer engaged among the ruder troubles of war, had so many public cares to occupy his time and thoughts. To add to all the other disadvantages he had to struggle with, he is stated to have been attacked, ere he had completed his twentieth year, with an agonizing internal disease, which, although it did not incapacitate him for the performance of any of his royal functions, tormented him so unremittingly as hardly to leave him an entire day's exemption from misery during the remainder of his life; or if it ever, to use the affecting language of Asser, was through the mercy of God withdrawn from him for a day, or a night, or even a single hour, it would yet continue to make him wretched by the thought of the excruciating distress he would have to suffer when it returned.

Alfred, who was, if ever any one was, literally the Father of his country, presiding over and directing the whole management of affairs, almost as if the people had been indeed his family, accomplished what he did chiefly by the golden rule of doing every thing at its own time. The method which he took, in the want of a better time-piece, to measure the flight of the hours by means of graduated wax candles, inclosed in lanthorns to protect them from the wind, is well known. He usually divided the day and night, we are told, into three portions, of eight hours each: the first of which he devoted to religious meditation and study, the second to public affairs, and the third to rest and necessary refreshment. Alfred died, as is generally stated, on the 26th of October, 901; but some authorities place his decease a year, and some two years earlier. By his wife Elswitha he had three sons, the second of whom, Edward, succeeded him on the throne—the eldest having died in his father's life-time—and three daughters. England has had no monarch, or patriot, of whom she has more reason to be proud, nor indeed does the history of any nation record a more perfect character, than this Anglo-Saxon sovereign.

## Edward.

REIGNED FROM 901 TO 925.

EDWARD, surnamed the Elder, was the son and successor of Alfred, and the first of that name that sat on the English throne. His father's exertions had left him an authority so firmly established that the efforts of his enemies were unable to overturn it; his accession, however, was the immediate signal for civil discord, and his title was challenged by his cousin Ethelwald, son of king Ethelbald, the elder brother of Alfred,

<sup>15</sup> See Hearne's notes upon Spelman, p. 213.

who claimed the crown as his hereditary right. Arming his partisans, he took possession of Wimburn, where he seemed determined to maintain the contest and wait the issue of his pretensions. But the memory of Alfred was grateful to the English nation, and when Edward marched his army to the town, the heroism of the ambitious prince sunk at the prospect of certain destruction, and making his escape, he fled first to Normandy, and then into Northumberland, where the turbulent Danes joined his standard, and proclaimed him their sovereign at York. This activity gave his hostilities an importance that endangered the public peace, and threatened the nation with a renewal of those convulsions, from which the valour and policy of Alfred had so lately rescued them. At the head of the rebels he made an incursion into the counties of Gloucester, Oxford, and Wilts; but their ravages were checked by the approach of Edward with an army, who pursued them into the fens of Lincolnshire, and retaliated the injuries they had committed by spreading the like devastations in East Anglia. Sated with vengeance and loaded with spoil, the king directed his troops to retire; but the order was disobeyed by the men of Kent, who ventured from their cupidity of plunder, to stay behind the rest, and took up their quarters at Bury. The Danes attacked and overpowered them with a superior force, but they made a desperate defence; and though the battle was lost, the issue proved fortunate to Edward, for the bravest of the rebel chiefs, and among them Ethelwald himself, perished in the action. His fate released the king from the trouble of a dangerous competitor, and a peace on advantageous terms was concluded with the Anglo-Danes.<sup>1</sup>

This truce, however, was of short duration, and in the year 910, the flame of war was again rekindled between the rival parties. The Northumbrians, assisted by the Danes in Mercia, exercised their depredations in different parts of the country, while Edward, to divert the forces of those freebooters, collected a fleet of one hundred ships to attack them by sea, hoping when this armament arrived on their coast, they must at least remain at home and provide for their defence. Concluding that the principal strength of the king was embarked in this naval expedition, the rebels advanced into the country to the Avon, committing spoil and pillage without apprehension. But an army was also prepared to chastise their temerity, and at Wodensfield they were surprised into a pitched battle, when they were defeated with the slaughter of many thousands.<sup>2</sup> The event of this action established the superiority of Edward over his factious neighbours, and while his arms continued to be successful in assaulting and repulsing their inroads, he was not less provident in putting his kingdom in a posture of defence. The possession of the north of England from the Humber to the Tweed, and of the eastern districts from the Ouse to the sea, gave him an extensive frontier on which invasion was easy; but a line of fortresses was erected to secure those places where hostilities were most practicable. The garrisons were filled with a sufficiency of troops, who, when the invaders approached, were ready to march out in junction with the provincial forces to repel them; by this plan of vigilance and energy, Edward secured the protection of his kingdom. At once

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax. 100.—Hunt. p. 352.

<sup>2</sup> This victory was long a favourite subject of song with the national poets.

to strengthen the boundary of Mercia, and coerce the Welsh on the western limit, he fortified the towns of Chester, Eddesbury, Stafford, Warwick, Cherbury, Buckingham, Towcester, Malden, Huntingdon, Manchester, Leicester, and Nottingham. In the year 918, his strength was tried by foreign invasion, the Northmen from Armorica entered the Severn with a fleet led by two earls, and having disembarked, they commenced their devastations in North Wales and Herefordshire. But Edward had intrusted armed bodies to watch the whole territory from Cornwall to the Avon, and falling in with the two divisions in Somersetshire, they overtook and destroyed them.<sup>3</sup> The miserable remnant sheltered themselves in a neighbouring island till, spent with famine, they escaped to South Wales, and thence to Ireland.

Conscious of his now consolidated power, Edward resolved to abolish the separate government of Mercia, which had lost its warrior-queen, Ethelfleda, in 920, and the same year it was incorporated with Wessex. The young regent Elfwin was brought off, and by this measure he advanced one step nearer to the monarchy of England. To counteract this gradual accumulation of power, the Anglo-Danes renewed their incursions, but they were again defeated in two signal battles at Tempsford and Malden. These triumphs led to the submission of other districts; and the East Angles not only swore to Edward "that they would will what he should will," and promised immunity to all under his protection, but the Danish army at Cambridge chose him for their special lord and patron.<sup>4</sup> The influence of these successive examples of submission soon spread itself. Stamford and its vicinity acknowledged Edward's dominion, as did Northumberland, whose two rival princes, Reginald and Sidroc, he expelled. Several tribes of the Britons, with their kings, were also subdued by him; and even the Scots, who, during the reign of Egbert, had augmented their power by the final subjugation of the Picts, were compelled to bow to his supremacy.<sup>5</sup> In all these fortunate achievements of his reign, Edward was greatly assisted by the prudence and activity of his sister Ethelfleda, queen of Mercia. He died—according to the Saxon chronicle—at Forrington, in Berkshire, in the year 925, though other authorities say 924.

This prince must be ranked amongst the illustrious founders of the English monarchy. He executed with vigour the military plans of his father, and not only secured the Anglo-Saxons from a Danish sovereignty, but even prepared the way for that destruction of the Anglo-Danish power which his descendant achieved. Inferior to his father in knowledge and learning, he yet equalled him in military talent; though the opposition through which he had to struggle, was by no means so formidable as that which Alfred had to encounter and overcome in ascending the throne. Edward had many children. His first marriage produced two sons, Ethelward and Edwin, and six daughters. Four of

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. 102, 105.

<sup>4</sup> Chron. Sax. 109.

<sup>5</sup> The Saxon Chronicle says that Edward built and fortified a town at Badecanwyllan in Peaeland, which Lingard conceives must have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of Bathgate in West Lothian: for the Chronicle proceeds to tell us that it was on occasion of Edward's building this fortress that "the king of the Scots, and all the people of the Scots, and the king of the Strathclyde Gaels, and all the Strathclyde Gaels, chose him for their father and lord." 110.



the princesses graced the dignity of continental potentates ; and the maiden fair may smile at their homely accomplishments which embraced the use of the needle and the distaff. By a second marriage he had two sons, Edmund and Edred, who in course of time succeeded to his crown ; and three daughters, one of whom, a lady of exquisite beauty, was wedded to the prince of Aquitain.

## Athelstan.

BORN A. D. 895.—DIED A. D. 946.

ATHELSTAN, the son of Edward the Elder, was the twenty-fourth king of the West Saxons, and crowned at Kingston on the Thames. He was the first-born of Edward,—the first of an early attachment to a shepherd's daughter ; but this stain on his descent was not reckoned so considerable in those times as to exclude him from the throne, especially as he was, at his accession, of mature age, and endowed with talents that fitted him for the government of a nation so much exposed to foreign attacks and intestine convulsions. Brompton and some others would lead us to infer that his birth was legitimate, but this account is rejected by many ancient and most of our modern writers. The circumstances of his nativity are somewhat romantic, yet well attested. The shepherdess Edgina, when a girl, dreamed that a light resembling the moon, shone from her person, so brilliantly that it illuminated all England. This vision she innocently related to an old woman who had nursed prince Edward in the court of his father, Alfred. The aged dame, struck with the extraordinary beauty of the child, and the curious particulars of the dream, took her home and kept her as her own daughter. Some time afterwards, prince Edward happening to pay a visit to his nurse, took notice of the fair Edgina, fell in love with her, and had by her this son, whom, on account of his mother's dream, he named Athelstan, or 'the most noble:' light being, according to the interpreters of these superstitions, a symbol of majesty. His birth occurred in the year 895, six years before the death of his grandfather, Alfred, who took great pains with his education, recommending him in his infancy to the care of his daughter, the celebrated Ethelfleda, and soon after to that of her husband, Ethered, one of the ablest captains of the age in which he lived. When young Athelstan was of years to be introduced at court, he was brought thither by his tutor. The king was so interested in his appearance, so pleased with his beauty, spirit, and manners, that he invested him prematurely with the dignity of knighthood, giving him a purple robe, a belt set with jewels, and a Saxon sword in a golden scabbard.<sup>1</sup>

The blessing or prediction of Alfred, and the circumstance of his being destined for the throne by his father's will, obtained for Athelstan from the thanes of Mercia and Wessex, the preference to Edward's other children, who, though legitimate, were of too tender an age for so important a charge. But scarcely was he seated in the regal authority, when a dangerous conspiracy was formed against him by Alfred, a discontented nobleman, whose intention was to seize the

<sup>1</sup> Malm. 29.

person of his sovereign at Winchester, and put out his eyes. The plot, however, was discovered, and its author apprehended; but he steadfastly denied it; and the king, to show his strict regard for justice, sent him to Rome there to purge himself by oath, before the altar of St Peter,—a place deemed so holy, that no one was presumed wicked enough to swear falsely and escape the immediate vengeance of heaven. The papal chair was then filled by John X., before whom the conspirator, either conscious of his innocence, or regardless of the superstition to which he appealed, ventured to make the oath required of him. But—if we may believe the legends of the monks, who were artful enough either to invent or to give credibility to their miracles—no sooner had he pronounced the fatal words, than he fell into convulsions, and being carried by his servants to the English school, died there on the third day in great torment. The pope denied his lady christian burial until such time as he had acquainted Athelstan, at whose request it was afterwards granted. The evidence of his guilt being now so clearly ascertained, the king confiscated his estate and made a present of it to the monastery of Malmesbury.<sup>2</sup>

Having, by the suppression of this piece of domestic treason, secured his dominion over his English subjects, Athelstan set himself next to make provision against the insurrections of the Danes, which had created so much disturbance to his predecessors. For this purpose he marched into Northumberland, then ruled by Sithrie, a Danish nobleman; but finding the inhabitants impatient of the English yoke, and perhaps from the circumstances of his birth and the existence of legitimate brothers, dreading to provoke a doubtful war, he preferred courting his alliance rather than encountering his enmity, and attached him to his interests by giving him the title of king, and his sister Editha in marriage. This policy, however, proved accidentally the source of dangerous consequences. Sithrie, on espousing the princess, had consented, as a condition, to renounce Paganism and embrace Christianity; but in a few months repenting of his conversion, he put away his wife and resumed his idolatry. This insult roused Athelstan and the Anglo-Saxons to arms; but before the invasion was effected, Sithrie died. His two sons who succeeded him determined to maintain by force the religion and the independence of their father; but they were soon driven from their territories by Athelstan, and fled, the warlike Anlaf into Ireland, and Godfrid into Scotland, where his pretensions to the sovereignty for some time received the countenance of Constantine, who then enjoyed the crown of that kingdom. Messengers were despatched to the king of Scots to demand back the fugitive prince; and in case of refusal, preparations were made for invading his dominions. But from reasons not well-explained, Athelstan thought fit to accommodate this quarrel, and made peace with Constantine; though others relate that he defeated and took Constantine prisoner, but out of generous compassion immediately set him at liberty, saying, there was more honour in making a king, than in being a king. This latter narrative, however, is by no means probable, and seems to be confounded with a subsequent invasion. Godfrid contrived by the friendly warning of his protector to effect his escape, and made a fruitless effort to

<sup>2</sup> Malm. 28, 29.

interest the city of York in his favour. At length he was compelled to submit, and was honourably received by Athelstan. Four days of enjoyment satiated him with the splendour of a court and the charms of civilised life; yielding to early habits, the pagan barbarian renounced that tranquillity which is so grateful to the cultured mind, and abandoned himself to the roving occupation of maritime piracy. His death, some years after, freed the Anglo-Saxon king from any farther apprehension.

Meantime, Constantine, whether he owed the retaining of his crown to the moderation or to the policy of Athelstan, who reckoned it more glorious to confer than conquer kingdoms, thought the conduct of the English monarch more an object of resentment than of gratitude. If he had been a released prisoner, he made a very ungenerous requital to his benefactor, for he entered into a confederacy with Anlaf and many of the neighbouring chiefs, though we have no distinct account of the number that constituted this formidable alliance. Anlaf had collected a great body of Danish pirates whom he found hovering in the Irish seas. Some of the Welsh princes were drawn into the league from a jealousy of the growing power of Athelstan. Eugenius, king of Cumberland, joined the Scots and Picts; and this coalition was yet farther augmented by fleets of warriors from Norway and the Baltic. This mighty combination excited great attention in Europe as well as in England, and is found narrated in the northern sagas as well as in the monkish chronicles. Athelstan made the most strenuous exertion to put himself in a condition to meet his enemies, particularly by promises of high reward to every soldier who should join his standard. After four years of preparation the confederates put their armament in motion. Anlaf entered the Humber with a fleet of 615 ships, and admitting the moderate quota of fifty men to each, his troops must have exceeded thirty thousand. The invaders then marched their concentrated force to Brumford, or Brunsbury, or Brumbridge—for the position is not well-ascertained—in Northumberland, near the place where Athelstan had pitched his camp. While both armies lay here, Anlaf, being desirous to inspect the enemy's quarters, that he might with surer success take them by surprise, made use of the same stratagem that Alfred had formerly practised, and which was probably an artifice familiar to the Northmen of that age. Laying aside his regal vestments, and concealing himself under the disguise of a minstrel, he entered the Saxon camp, and went about singing and playing on his harp from tent to tent till he was brought before the king. If he had delighted the soldiers who flocked round him, his music and dancing were not less gratifying to Athelstan. Pleased with his performances, he dismissed the harper with a handsome reward; but the pride of Anlaf revolted against accepting a gift from his enemy. On quitting the camp he resolved to dispossess himself of the royal present, and to avoid detection he cut with his knife a piece of turf, under which he buried the money. But he was not unobserved. A soldier who had formerly served under him, struck with some suspicion on his first appearance, had narrowly watched his movements; and perceiving in this last act a full confirmation of his suspicions, he immediately carried the intelligence to Athelstan, who blamed him for not sooner giving him infor-



mation, that he might have seized the adventurous spy. But the soldier told him that, as he had once sworn fealty to Anlaf, he could never have forgiven himself the treachery of betraying his ancient master; and that had he done so, his present sovereign might, after such an instance of perfidious conduct, have had equal reason to distrust his allegiance. He ventured, however, to counsel his majesty to remove his tent to another quarter,—an advice which it was thought prudent to comply with. The station thus left vacant by the king's removal was occupied by the bishop of Sherburn, who arrived in the evening with his reinforcement of soldiers: for, in those turbulent ages, the ecclesiastical and civil authorities were no less warlike than the regular professors of the military art. The event showed the wisdom of this precaution; for no sooner had darkness fallen than Anlaf, with a select band broke into the camp, and hastening directly to the spot where he had left the royal tent, cut the bishop and his retinue to pieces before they had time to prepare for their defence.<sup>3</sup> But this triumph was of short duration. Athelstan hearing of the disaster, united and arranged all his forces for a decisive engagement. They were divided into two bodies,—the first consisting of West Saxons, commanded by himself, which charged Anlaf,—the second, comprehending the warriors of Mercia and London, were conducted by the valiant Turketul, the chancellor, and opposed to the Scots and Cumbrians under Constantine. The conflict raged with great obstinacy. Whole ranks were mowed down, and their loss as quickly supplied by others hastening to become victims. The fortune of the day was determined by the valiant chancellor; having formed a compact body of chosen veterans from the citizens of London and the men of Worcestershire, he placed his huge muscular figure at their head, and rushed on the enemy with resistless impetuosity, heedless of the arrows and spears that fastened in his armour. The Scots made a gallant defence, but they were at length compelled to give way. Constantine, their king, succeeded in effecting his escape, but he lost his eldest son, a circumstance which has led some writers erroneously to assert that he himself fell in this memorable battle. The overthrow of their confederates so disheartened Anlaf's division that they also fled, charged in the rear by the victorious Turketul. This famous engagement, admitted to have been one of the bloodiest ever fought in the island, is celebrated in most of the annals of the time, both English and foreign. Among the Anglo-Saxons it excited such rejoicings, that not only their poets aspired to commemorate it, but the songs were so popular, that one of them is inserted in the Saxon Chronicle as the best memorial of the event. It states the battle to have lasted from sunrise till sunset,—mentions the death of five kings, and seven dukes or earls,—the flight of Constantine and Anlaf,—and the noble valour of the Saxon warriors. Nor are the monks and miracle-workers silent on this subject, some of whom, though little deserving of credit, may not be unworthy of notice. We are gravely assured that when Athelstan had dropped his sword in the field, another fell from heaven into the scabbard, at the prayer of Otho, archbishop of Canterbury; and with this celestial instrument he fought during the remainder of the day. He had, moreover, a visionary pre-

<sup>3</sup> Malm. 26.

sage of this conquest, four years before, when he invaded and defeated the Scots. In that expedition he had met on the road many pilgrims returning from the shrine of St John of Beverley, where the lame, the blind, and the sick, used then to resort for the cure of their respective diseases. The king ordering his army to march forward, went himself on a pilgrimage to this miraculous tomb; and, having besought the saint to give him assistance in the war which he had undertaken, he left his dagger as a pledge for the faithful performance of the vows he had there made. St John duly discharged his part of the agreement, for, in a vision, he promised him his aid, by which means Constantine and the Scots were completely discomfited. But not satisfied with merely gaining a victory, Athelstan ventured to request another favour from the saint: that he would be pleased to give some sign that might convince the Scots their kingdom depended *jure divino* on that of England. In consequence of this prayer, his arm was endowed with such supernatural strength that he cut with a stroke of his sword an ell deep into a solid rock near his camp at Dunbar, and left that chasm as an indubitable mark of his sovereignty over the country. The legend is abundantly absurd, but it is not unworthy of being recorded, and derives some importance from the historical fact that this cleft stone at Dunbar is actually insisted on by Edward I. in his letter to Pope Boniface, wherein he states his right over the king and kingdom of Scotland.

The battle of Brunsbury secured to Athelstan the undisputed enjoyment of his crown. Its successful result was of such consequence as to raise him to a most venerated dignity in the eyes of all Europe. The kings of the continent sought his friendship, and England began to assume a majestic attitude among the nations of the West. It was the fame of his exploits that induced Henry the Fowler, then emperor of Germany, to demand one of his sisters in marriage for his son Otho. Hugo, king of the Franks, solicited another of them for his son; and Lewis, prince of Aquitain, sent an embassy to desire a third for himself. On this occasion greater presents were sent into England than had ever been seen before, and the glory of Athelstan's court far surpassed that of any of his predecessors. In pursuance of his favourite design of rendering himself supreme master of the whole island, he led his victorious army immediately against the Welsh, or more properly the ancient Britons, and in this expedition he was equally fortunate; for, having beaten them in the field, he caused Ludwald, king of Wales, with all his petty princes, to meet him at Hereford, where they did him homage, and promised to pay him an yearly tribute of twenty pounds of gold, three hundred pounds of silver, one hundred pounds of wool, and twenty-five thousand head of cattle, with as many hawks and hounds as he should demand. He likewise expelled the Britons who had hitherto dwelt conjointly with the English at Exeter, and forced them to retire into Cornwall; making the river Tamar the boundary of his dominions on this side, as he had fixed the Wye on the other.<sup>4</sup> So decisive was his subjugation of the Anglo-Danes, that he has received the fame of being the founder of the English monarchy,—an honour generally ascribed to Egbert. The

<sup>4</sup> The language of the ancient Britons was preserved in Cornwall until the reign of Henry VIII.

competition for this distinction can only rest between Alfred and Athelstan; but the Danish kings divided the island with the former; and it was not till his grandson had completely subjected those foreign invaders that the English monarchy was indisputably established. The defeat of Anlaf left him no competitor, and gave him the unquestionable title of being the immediate sovereign of all England.

Besides his good understanding with France and Germany, Athelstan was on intimate terms with Harold of Norway, who sent his son Haco to be educated at the English court, and to learn the customs of that nation, who stood much higher in the scale of refinement than the Norwegians then just emerging from their original barbarism. The young prince was carefully instructed in every becoming accomplishment, and received a sword from his royal guardian which he kept till his death. Harold on this occasion sent a present of a magnificent ship, with a golden prow, and purple sails surrounded with shields gilt internally. When disturbance at home recalled Haco to assist in expelling Eric, who had usurped the sole dominion of Norway at the expense of murdering his brother, Athelstan equipped and manned a fleet for his pupil, who by his aid succeeded in establishing himself on his father's throne in place of the cruel Eric.<sup>5</sup> These generous actions have been passed in silence by most English writers, and thus has their monarch been robbed of part of his fame, but they are attested by the chronicles of the countries benefitted by his liberality. The remainder of his reign elapsed in peace and glory until the period of his death, which happened at Gloucester in the year 941.<sup>6</sup>

As to the person of Athelstan, we are told that he was of the middle size, of a pleasant countenance, somewhat bent in the shoulders, with hair of a bright yellow, twisted with golden threads. It does not appear that he was ever married, though the fabulous writers of the life of Guy of Warwick speak of a natural daughter of his, whom they name Leonada. His people loved him for his bravery and his beneficence; and he certainly ranks as one of the most admired princes of the age in which he lived, on account of his wisdom, his wealth, and the extent of his dominions, for he was not only monarch of England, but nominal lord of Wales and Scotland, which he had subdued as far as Dunbar, having ravaged the coasts with his fleets to the extremity of Caithness. He had received a liberal education, and was a great promoter of learning, though his subsequent attainments in knowledge have not been transmitted to us. There is however a small catalogue of his books extant; and if we may credit Tindal and Bale, he ordered the Bible to be translated from the Hebrew into the Saxon tongue for the use of his subjects, a task which they suppose to have been done by certain Jews converted to the Christian faith. Leland says that he found in the library of the monastery at Bath some books which had been given by this prince to the monks there; one of which, a treatise *De Synodis Pontificiis*, he brought from thence and placed in the library of king Henry VIII. It has an inscription of six lines, the first of which fixed its ownership.

<sup>5</sup> "He was extolled, and deservedly, for his good government. And the laws of Haco 'the foster-son of Athelstan,' are the earliest written specimens of the legislation of Scandinavia, and the best proof of the advantages derived by the Norwegian prince from his education at the court of the Anglo-Saxon king." Palgrave, vol. 1. p. 211.

<sup>6</sup> Chron. Sax. 114.



On me great Ethelstan was wont to look,  
And still his mark declares me once his book, &c.

But the great fame of this monarch arose from his laws, of which we have two editions, one by Lombard, and the other by Brompton. These are numerous and highly curious. One book consists of ancient laws, corrected, another of manners, and a third of constitutions for the government of the clergy. Mr Selden speaks of them very respectfully; and the perusal of them lets us into the knowledge of the Saxon antiquities, and thereby illustrates the history not only of those times, but also the grounds of our constitution as it still stands. Turner has mentioned the substance of some of these enactments, and they are useful in throwing light on the general policy of that reign. For the encouragement of commerce it was decreed that every merchant who should go three times beyond sea in trading-voyages on his own account, should be admitted to the rank of a thane or gentleman. A similar honour was connected with agriculture. Every ceorl who had five hides of his own land, a church, a kitchen, a bell-house, a seat at the city gate, and a separate office in the king's hall, was also to become a thane. But the possession of arms of honour, without land, would not exalt the proprietor. The prohibition to export horses, unless for presents, implies that the English steeds were valued abroad; and the law not to put sheep-skins as a cover upon shields, would seem to indicate that parchment was becoming more precious, and of course that literature was increasing. Amidst all his greatness Athelstan forgot not the rights of the poor. He ordered that each of his overseers should feed in all ways one indigent Englishman, if any such they either had or could find; and that from every two of his farms, one measure of meal, one gammon of bacon, or a ram, with four pennies, should be given monthly, and clothing for twelve months every year. He also commanded each of them annually to redeem one miserable being who had forfeited his liberty by a penal adjudication; and the consequence of disregarding any of these charitable precepts was a fine of thirty shillings. He is represented as having been a great benefactor to the church; he rebuilt several monasteries, and to most of them he was very liberal in books, ornaments, or endowments. It was a common saying of the Anglo-Saxons, that no prince more legally, or more learnedly, conducted a government; and, considering his character and acquirements, it is not surprising that he should have been beloved at home and admired abroad.

One incident yet remains to be stated, which has left an indelible stain on the memory and the virtues of this monarch,—the murder of his brother Edwin. Though the point is obscure, and the details contradictory, yet the fact is generally believed, and has been recorded by all the annalists of the times. The cause of the guilty deed was this. In the conspiracy of Alfred, Edwin, then a youth, was arraigned as an accomplice in the rebellion. The king, naturally suspicious, gave credit to the accusation, and notwithstanding the charge was denied on his oath, and the royal clemency implored by his friends, the innocence of the prince was not believed. Athelstan ordered him, with only one attendant, to be put on board a leaky boat without oars, and cast on the

sea.<sup>7</sup> For some time they continued in sight of land, but a tempest arose, and drove them into the bosom of the deep. Without hope, and in danger of starvation, Edwin sprung from the shattered bark, and buried his despair in the waves. His body was afterwards thrown ashore between Dover and Whitsand. For seven years Athelstan in a cooler mood mourned his death with a penitence which could not obliterate the crime from his memory, and still less atone for it; though the monastery of Middleton in Dorsetshire was built in evidence of his contrition. The deed never could leave the conscience of the murderer, and an anecdote is related how keen his sensibilities were on this subject. The royal cup-bearer, who had been the prime instigator of this cruel action, happened while serving the king at table, to make a false step with one foot; but recovering himself with the other, "See," said he jocularly, "how one brother affords another help!" a remark which cost the unwary courtier his life, as being the cause of that fratricide which he now spoke of with so much levity. Except this foul blot—which is perhaps darkened by our ignorance of its true reasons—the testimony of history is in favour of Athelstan's uniform kindness to his brothers and sisters, for whose sake, it is said, he resolved to lead a life of celibacy.

## Edmund the Elder.

BORN A. D. 922.—DIED A. D. 946.

EDMUND, sometimes called the Elder, son of Edward by his second wife, succeeded to the crown on the death of Athelstan. At the outset of his reign he met with renewed disturbance from Anlaf and the restless Northumbrians, who lay in wait for every opportunity of breaking into rebellion. Anlaf had been invited from Ireland, and being proclaimed king of Northumberland, he collected a large armament, and landing near York, marched into the heart of Mercia. Edmund was less able or less fortunate than his predecessor, for Anlaf defeated him at Tamworth; but the Anglo-Saxon government was now so well established that these partial disasters could not overturn it. At Leicester the king surrounded the rebel chief, with his friend Wolfstan the ambitious archbishop of York; but at night they made a sally from the town, and in the battle which ensued, the palm of victory after a day of conflict again fell to Anlaf. Edmund was now glad to listen to negotiations, and a peace was concluded much less honourable to him than his rival, to whom he agreed to surrender all that part of England which extended north of Watling street, reserving to himself the southern regions. To the treaty this most humiliating condition was annexed, that whoever survived the other should be sole monarch of the whole. The death of Anlaf, the following year, relieved Edmund of a dangerous competitor, who, by his talents and intrepidity, had raised himself to so near a possession of the English crown. The loss of their leader was followed by the submission of the rebels, and as a sure pledge of their obedience they offered to embrace Christianity,—a religion which

<sup>7</sup> A common mode of punishment in the middle ages.

the Anglo-Danes had often professed when reduced to difficulties, but which, for that very reason, they regarded as a badge of servitude, and shook off as soon as a favourable contingency offered. Trusting little to the security of a conversion thus compulsory, Edmund used the precaution of suppressing the independence of the five cities—Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Stamford, and Lincoln—which the Danes had long occupied, and where they took advantage of every commotion to make inroads into the heart of the kingdom.<sup>1</sup> With the help of the king of South Wales he conquered Cumberland,<sup>2</sup> and conferred that territory on Malcolm king of Scotland, on the condition that he should do homage for it, and protect the northern frontier from all future incursions of the Danes.<sup>3</sup>

Edmund was young when he came to the throne, yet his reign was short and his death violent. The circumstances of his murder, however, are related with more of variation than a transaction so simple and so affecting could be thought to occasion. The most current account is, that while celebrating the feast of St Augustine at Canterbury, or in Gloucestershire, he remarked that Leolf, a notorious robber whom he had sentenced to banishment six years before, had yet the boldness

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax. 114.

<sup>2</sup> "The Britons of Cumbria occupy a tolerably large space on the map, but a very small one in history; their annals have entirely perished; and nothing authentic remains concerning them, except a very few passages, wholly consisting of incidental notices relating to their subjection and their misfortunes. Romance would furnish much more; for it was in Cumbria that Rhyderc, or Roderic the magnificent, is therein represented to have reigned, and Merlin to have prophesied. Arthur held his court in merry Carlisle; and Peredur, the prince of Sunshine, whose name we find amongst the princes of Strath-clyde, is one of the greatest heroes of the 'Mabinogion,' or tales of youth, long preserved by tradition amongst the Cymry. These fantastic personages, however, are of importance in one point of view, because they show—what we might otherwise forget—that from the Ribble in Lancashire, or thereabouts, up to the Clyde, there existed a dense population, composed of Britons, who preserved their national language and customs, agreeing in all respects with the Welsh of the present day. So that, even in the tenth century, the ancient Britons still inhabited the greater part of the western coast of the island, however much they had been compelled to yield to the political supremacy of the Saxon invaders.

"The *Regnum Cumbrense* comprehended many districts, probably governed by petty princes or *Reguli*, in subordination to a chief monarch, or *Pendragon*. *Reged* appears to have been somewhere in the vicinity of Annandale. *Strath-clyde* is, of course, the district or vale of Clydesdale. In this district or state, was situated *Alcluyd*, or *Dun-britton*, now Dumbarton, where the British kings usually resided; and the whole Cumbrian kingdom was not unfrequently called *Strath-clyde*, from the ruling or principal state; just as the united kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland is often designated in common language as England, because England is the portion where the monarch and legislature are found. Many dependencies of the Cumbrian kingdom extended into modern Yorkshire, and Leeds was the frontier-town between the Britons and the Angles; but the former were always giving way, and their territory was broken and intersected by English settlements. Carlisle had been conquered by the Angles at a very early period; and Egrith of Northumbria bestowed that city upon the see of Lindisfarne. He extended his conquests into that district now called Furness in Lancashire. Kyle in Cunningham, was reduced by Edbert. *Alcluyd*, 'the strong city,' was besieged and taken by the same monarch, aided by Unnust king of the Picts, and afterwards wholly destroyed by Olave and Ingvar. Many Cumbrian tribes, harassed by the Northmen and also by the Saxons, wholly abandoned their country, and found shelter and protection in Wales or the Marches, where, it is said, they regained some of the lands which had been occupied by the Mercians. After the destruction of *Alcluyd*, these Britons were governed by kings of the Scottish line, who, probably, acquired their rights by intermarriage with a British princess; and Eugenius, or Owen, one of these rulers, was engaged, together with Constantine, king of the Scots, against Athelstane, in the great battle of Brunanburgh." *Palgrave's History*, vol. I. pp. 223—225.

<sup>3</sup> Malm. 53.—Hunt. 355.—The rights of the Scottish kings to 'the earldom of Cumberland'—for such it was afterwards termed—were founded upon Edmund's grant. *Palgrave*, vol. I. 226.



to enter the banquet-room, and sit at the table with the royal attendants. Enraged at his insolence, the king ordered him to quit the place, and on his refusing to obey, the indignant monarch, heated with liquor, and naturally of a choleric temper, sprung from his seat, seized the intruder by the hair and threw him on the ground. A general tumult ensued—a thing not unlikely to happen in the midst of Bacchanalian jollity—when the ruffian, pushed to extremity, drew a dagger which he had concealed, and gave Edmund a wound of which he immediately expired.<sup>4</sup> This occurred in 946, consequently in the sixth year of the king's reign and 24th of his age. He left male issue, but so young that they were incapable of assuming the reins of administration.

Edmund, like his predecessor, left a series of laws, which serve as an index to the sanguinary features of the times. Weary of the manifold quarrels which occurred daily in the country, he instituted farther regulations concerning homicide, the mulcts or penalties on which he forbade to be forgiven. He denied the benefit of refuge to all who shed blood, until they should have made the established compensation to the family of the deceased, and also that appropriated to the church, and have submitted to the right which the bishop of the shire should adjudge. The rules which he laid down concerning marriage contributed to the protection of the female sex, inasmuch as they required the pledge of the bridegroom to the attesting party, that he took the lady to be his wife, and would keep her as such: which his friends were compelled to guarantee. The bridegroom was also enjoined to state what his widow should have if she survived him; and by law she was entitled on his death to the half of his goods, and if they had children, to the whole, unless she chose another husband. An additional security for the sex was provided, by enacting, that if the husband wished to remove his wife into another district, the thane should be required to bind himself by the pledge of friends that he would do her no injury; and if she should commit a fault, and could not make reparation, that her relations should first be applied to.<sup>5</sup> These laws imply an imperfect state of social manners; but they evince that the female character was considered with respect and attention by the Anglo-Saxon legislators, and consequently that the civilization of the island was advancing towards maturity.

## Edred.

BORN A. D. 923.—DIED A. D. 955.

EDRED succeeded his elder brother, in “the fourfold empire of the Anglo-Saxons and Northumbrians, Pagans and Britons,” to use the style of his own charters; and, at the time of his elevation, must have been under twenty-three years of age. The Northumbrian Danes had been often subdued, but they never paid a sincere allegiance to the crown of England. A new accession was the signal for fresh disturbances. Eric of Norway had generously received from Athelstan a settlement in Northumberland, under the title of king. But to the habits of a barbarian, peace has fewer charms than plunder. The Nor-

<sup>4</sup> Malm. 54.

<sup>5</sup> Wilk. LL. Sax. 73.

wegian exile, therefore, still loved the activity of depredation. The numerous friends, with kindred feelings, who crowded to him from Norway, displeased or disappointed with the government of Haco, cherished his turbulent propensities; and to feed, to employ, or to emulate them, he consumed the summer-months by pirating in Scotland, the Hebrides, Ireland, and Wales. In the north of England he became formidable to the Anglo-Saxons. These proceedings provoked Edred, who assembled a vindictive army, and spread devastation over Northumberland, the inhabitants of which had violated their oath of fidelity to him.<sup>1</sup> Terrified by this chastisement, the rebellious Northumbrians again made their wonted submission, and renewed their oath of allegiance. But their obedience lasted no longer than their present apprehension. Again they revolted, and again they were subdued; but Edred, now instructed by experience, took greater precautions against their future insurrections. He fixed English garrisons in their most considerable towns, and placed in them governors in his own interest, who might watch their motions, and repress their predatory inclinations. He carried away in bonds the proudest nobles of the country, imprisoned the turbulent archbishop Wolfstan, and annexed that refractory territory inseparably to his dominions. He also obliged Malcolm of Scotland to renew his homage for the lands he held in England.

An infirm constitution had enfeebled the mind of Edred, and, though neither unwarlike nor unfit for active life, he was under the influence of the lowest superstition, and had blindly delivered over his conscience to the guidance of the famous Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, a man who veiled under the appearance of sanctity the most insatiable and insolent ambition.<sup>2</sup> Taking advantage of the implicit confidence reposed in him by the king, this wily churchman imported into England a new order of monks, who greatly changed the aspect of ecclesiastical affairs, and excited, on their first establishment, the most violent commotions. This was the Benedictines, an order to which Odo, archbishop of Canterbury, attached himself, and which, in course of time, became celebrated in Europe beyond every other. From Italy it spread itself into other countries, and at length reached England. Its regulations were peculiarly austere; and many of them seem the offspring of caprice. Each member was to sleep in a single bed; but, if possible, the whole fraternity was to be in the same room. They were to lie in their clothes, without knives. The younger brethren were not to have beds by themselves, but to be mixed with the elders. All were to take their turn in the work of the kitchen. In their diet they were debarred the flesh of quadrupeds, but there was no prohibition against fish or fowl: they were allowed both twice a-day, and a pound of bread. Even wine was not denied in sober quantity, though they were advised to abstain from it if they could. They were to study taciturnity, and, after supper, read the fathers, the lives of the saints, or other edifying subjects. In these dark ages any innovation, however absurd, that took the name of religion, was sure of a welcome reception; and no virtue was more popular than an affectation of abstinence and austerity. The praises of an inviolable chastity had

<sup>1</sup> Ingulf. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Wallingf. Chron.—Malm.

been carried to the highest extravagance by some of the first preachers of Christianity among the Saxons. The pleasures of love had been represented as incompatible with Christian perfection, and especially prohibited to those who officiated at the altar. The monks knew well how to avail themselves of these popular topics, and to set off their own character to the best advantage. Their lives, outwardly, were decent and abstemious, and they inveighed bitterly against the vices and pretended luxury of the age; against the dissolute manners of the secular clergy, their rivals, they were particularly vehement; and when other subjects of defamation failed, their marriages became a theme of reproach,<sup>3</sup> and their wives were insulted with the most opprobrious appellations. By these sacred feuds the people were thrown into agitation, and few instances occur of more violent dissensions than those that raged between the different theological parties. England, at this period, was beginning to suffer from the effects of these distractions; but the progress of the monks, which had become considerable, was retarded by the death of Edred their patron, who expired after a reign of nine years.<sup>4</sup> His children were left in their infancy, consequently unfit to undertake the government.

## Edwy.

BORN A. D. 939.—DIED A. D. 959.

EDWY, or EDWIN, as he is sometimes called, the eldest son of Edmund, succeeded his uncle Edred at the age of sixteen, in 955. He was possessed of the most amiable figure, and was endowed with the most promising virtues;<sup>1</sup> but his youth was the source of his calamities. A stripling king was incompetent to wage a war of policy or power with the enthusiastic advocates of a new ecclesiastical system, whose fanaticism envenomed their hostility, and rendered their vengeance at once insolent and implacable. No monarch, perhaps, would have been more beloved by his subjects, had he not unhappily, immediately on his accession, been engaged in a controversy with the monks, whose rage, neither the graces of the body, nor the qualities of the mind could mitigate, and who have loaded his memory with the same unrelenting opprobrium which they exercised against his person and dignity during his short but unfortunate reign. The history of this youthful monarch, as has been observed, can neither be read nor narrated with indifference. If ever the tear of sympathy was deserved,—if ever the indignation of the historian was imperiously demanded,—the misfortunes of Edwy will claim our compassion and excite our resentment. Being at an age when the force of the passions first begin to be felt, he had surrendered his tender heart to the charms of Elgiva, a beautiful princess of the royal blood. His love was pure and honourable; but the lady was within the degrees of affinity prohibited by the canon law, being his second or third cousin. His passion, however, was too strong to be repulsed by these artificial barriers; and, contrary to the

<sup>3</sup> Osberne in *Angl. Sac.* vol. ii. p. 92. cum notis Whart.

<sup>4</sup> *Chron. Sax.* 115.

<sup>5</sup> *Ethelw.* l. iv. c. 8.—Hunting. p. 356.



advice of his gravest counsellors, and the remonstrances of the more dignified clergy, he ventured to make her his wife. The austerity of the monks was scandalized; their fury knew no bounds; every epithet of abuse was poured on this illegitimate union. It is not improbable that the aspiring ambition of Dunstan and Odo, might make this unpopular match a handle to serve their own political aggrandisement. Edwy was no friend to their order; and his immature age was a tempting opportunity for humbling an opponent not to be neglected. The royal temper being once subdued and overawed by their authority, the government of England would virtually fall into their hands. That projects of this sort had impressed the mind of Dunstan, seems unquestionable, else he would hardly have attempted to intimidate and coerce the king so early as the day of his coronation. The monks had already signified their desire of expelling the seculars from all the convents, and possessing themselves of those rich establishments; the king's refusal to sanction this measure tended to inflame their vengeance still more, though he soon found cause to repent his provoking such dangerous enemies.

The coronation of the new king was performed with the usual solemnities, and after the ceremony, the guests were entertained in a great hall at a splendid banquet. When the repast was finished, and while the nobles and the clergy were indulging themselves in that riot and excess, which, from the example of their German ancestors, had become habitual to the English, Edwy either disrelishing this boisterous conviviality, or attracted by pleasures of a softer kind, left the table and retired to the queen's apartments.<sup>2</sup> A visit to a wife whom he tenderly loved was extremely natural, nor is it surprising that, weary with the pomp of majesty, he might wish to find in her society, a brief respite from the fatigues of office and the riot of a drunken festival: yet it must be admitted that his abandoning his guests on such an occasion, was very indecorous according to the customs of the age. Odo, who seems to have presided at the ceremony, when he saw that the company were displeased, ordered some persons to go and bring the king back to his place at table. This delicate embassy was declined, until two, more intrepid than the rest—Dunstan and his relation, a Bishop Cynesius—undertook to restore the prince, either willingly or otherwise, to his deserted seat. Forgetting what was due both to Edwy's rights as a man, and his dignity as a sovereign, the impertinent messengers burst into the king's private chamber, where they found him in company with his queen and her mother. Dunstan informed him that the nobles expected his immediate return. In communicating the wishes of his subjects there was no impropriety, though to assail his privacy was rude and disrespectful; but with the delivering of his errand his commission should have ended, and whether successful or not it was his duty to have withdrawn. As an ecclesiastic he should not have compelled him to a scene of intemperance; as a subject, it was treasonable to offer violence to his person. Not content, however, with a denial, Dunstan proceeded to the extreme of rudeness. Against the ladies he directed his insolent invective, and publicly bestowed on the queen the most odious epithet that can be applied to her sex. He

<sup>2</sup> Malm. 55.—Matt. West. 369.—Wallingf. 542.

upbraided the king with his effeminacy ; and, on his refusing to quit his seat, he tore him from the arms of his wife, forced the diadem on his head, and hurried him in the most indecent manner back to the disorderly hall. To the humblest individual this insolence must have been inexcusable ; to a king it was unpardonable. Edwy, though young and surrounded by such formidable adversaries, found an opportunity of taking revenge for this public breach of duty and decorum. He displayed a spirit of firmness and independence on which his enemies had not calculated. Dunstan was questioned concerning his administration of the treasury during the reign of Edred, and on his declining to give any account of the money expended, as he alleged, by order of the late king, he was accused of malversation in office, deprived of his honours and emoluments, and condemned to banishment. A voluntary flight saved the exiled monk from a severer exercise of the royal indignation, for he was scarcely three miles from shore on his way to Flanders, when a messenger arrived with orders to put out his eyes, had he been found in the kingdom. It was unfortunate for Edwy that he listened to the suggestion of his angry passions. The victim of his rage was not a mere insulated individual, or an obscure abbot of a distant monastery, who could be chastised with safety or impunity. He was the idol of a superstitious people, whom his bold artifices had deluded and attached to him. He possessed the friendship of the venerable chancellor Turketul, and was supported by Odo, the primate of England, over whom he had gained an absolute ascendant. It was also probable that most of the clergy and nobility who had feasted at the coronation, conceived themselves bound to protect him, as his punishment arose from his executing, however offensively, their commission. During his absence, therefore, the partisans of Dunstan were not inactive. They lauded his sanctity ; exclaimed against the impiety of the king and queen ; and, having poisoned the minds of the people by these declamations, they proceeded to still more outrageous acts of violence against the royal authority. In this conspiracy the fierce Odo distinguished himself as the most prominent in avenging his absent friend. He dissolved the king's marriage on the plea of kinship ; and, having sent a party of soldiers to the palace to seize the queen, he barbarously caused her face to be branded by a red-hot iron, in order to destroy that fatal beauty which had seduced Edwy.<sup>3</sup> She was then forcibly conveyed to Ireland, there to remain in perpetual exile. The king, too feeble to resist, was obliged to consent to his divorce ; but a catastrophe still more dismal awaited the hopeless Elgiva. Nature having healed her wounds, and even obliterated the scars by which her persecutors had hoped for ever to deface her charms, she returned to England, and appeared at Gloucester in all her beauty, flying to the embraces of a prince whom she still regarded as her husband. Again she was pursued, and fell into the hands of the party whom the barbarous prelate had sent to intercept her. Nothing but death could give security to her enemies, or satiate their vengeance ; and, horrible to relate, in a spirit of the most revolting cruelty, they cut the nerves and muscles of her legs, that she might wander from their vengeance no more ! In a state of extreme torture she lingered

<sup>3</sup> Osberne, p. 84.—Gervase, 1644.

at Gloucester for a few days, until death released her at once from her sufferings and the brutal rage of her murderers.<sup>1</sup> The heart shudders with horror and indignation at a recital of these facts; and perhaps human nature never presents a darker picture of its own depravity, than when connecting such barbarities with piety, and committing them in the name of a religion which breathes nothing but love, and peace, and charity.

Instead of being shocked at these atrocities,—instead of resenting the indignity offered to their sovereign,—the English people, such is the baneful influence of superstition, exclaimed that the misfortunes of Edwy and his consort were a just judgment for their dissolute contempt of the ecclesiastical statutes. From clamour they proceeded to rebellion. The Mercians and Northumbrians threw off their allegiance, drove him into the southern counties beyond the Thames, and appointed Edgar his brother, a boy of thirteen, to govern them in his stead. The prime instigator of this revolt was no doubtful personage; for the exile, Dunstan, was immediately recalled with honour, and took upon him the superintendence of Edgar and his party. The Benedictine reformation was popular, and Dunstan had the credit of being at once its champion and its martyr. His hostility to the king seemed thus enlisted on the side of virtue and morality; and this apparent sanctity gained him abundance of supporters, and paved the way to his clerical advancement. He was first installed in the see of Westminster, then in that of London, and, after the death of Odo, and the expulsion of his successor Brithelm, in that of Canterbury. Meantime the anathemas of the church were launched against Edwy, who was excommunicated and denounced as a loose voluptuary. But in three years after the revolt of his subjects, death put a period to his ignominious treatment, and completed the triumph of his enemies. One author, but he is a solitary evidence, states that he was assassinated; and if his words do not imply violent death, we must at least believe the affecting account, that his spirit was so crushed and wounded by his persecutions, that, unable to bear unmerited odium, deposition from power, a brother's usurpation, and the murder of a beloved wife, he sunk into a premature grave, heart-broken, and before he had reached the full age of manhood. Edwy is admitted to have had capacity, and given promise of an honourable reign; but his virtues had no weight with the nation when thrown into the balance against a popular superstition, which was gathering strength every day. Perhaps, instead of braving the storm, had he complied a little with the imperious law of necessity, and waited till by manly prudence he had acquired character, enforced habits of respect, and created friends capable of defending him, his malicious and remorseless calumniators might have been irretrievably humbled. His fall was a triumph to ecclesiastical tyranny, and an unfortunate example to Europe. It exhibited to the ambitious clergy the spectacle of a king insulted, injured, persecuted, and dethroned by priestly interference; and as his successor became the submissive and flattering slave of his monastic leaders, it must have given a consequence to their influence, which operated powerfully to subject the royal authority in every court to their control.

<sup>1</sup> Osberne p. 84.—Gervase, 1644.



## Edgar.

BORN A. D. 942.—DIED A. D. 975.

EDGAR mounted, in 959, the throne which his conduct had contributed to make vacant; yet his boyish years may transfer the crime of his seditious attainment of power, to the self-intrusted agents who prompted it. Though young, he discovered an excellent capacity in the administration of affairs; and his reign is one of the most prosperous to be met with in ancient English history. Part of his greatness, no doubt, was owing to the talents of those who had preceded him; for, except the last, their swords had annihilated opposition, or left him no formidable power to encounter. He showed no aversion to war, but the fortunate condition of the kingdom did not render it necessary. He boasted indeed in one of his charters, that he had subdued all the islands of the ocean with their ferocious kings, as far as Norway, and the greater part of Ireland, with its most noble city Dublin: these victories, however, must have been the invention of the panegyrical monks, as no wars of his have been recorded, except an invasion of Wales. But he made wise preparations against invaders; and by this vigorous precaution he was enabled, without any danger of suffering insults, to indulge his inclinations towards peace, and to employ himself in supporting and improving the internal government of his kingdom. To complete the subjugation of Northumberland, he convoked the barons, and divided the county into two provinces, making the river Tees the line of separation; and to check their mutinous spirit as well as to repel the inroads of the Scots, he maintained a body of disciplined troops, which he quartered in the north. He built and kept a powerful navy afloat; and that he might retain the seamen in the practice of their duty, and always present a formidable armament to his enemies, he stationed three squadrons off the coast, and ordered them to make from time to time the circuit of his dominions. The amount of ships has been estimated at twelve hundred, and by some at three thousand,<sup>1</sup>—a number incredible in itself, and inconsistent with the state of the navy in the days of Alfred, besides being superfluous to guard so small a territory, and in a season of profound peace. A more commendable and efficient practice was that of riding every spring and winter through the different provinces, to investigate the conduct of the great, to protect the weak, and to punish every violation of the laws. The advantages of this vigilant policy were obvious. The foreign Danes dared not to approach a country which appeared in such a posture of defence. The Anglo-Danes saw inevitable destruction to be the consequence of their revolt; while the neighbouring sovereigns, the king of Scotland, the petty princes of Wales, the Isle of Man, the Orkneys, and even of Ireland, were proud to pay submission to so formidable a monarch. Edgar made an ostentatious display of his power, and carried his superiority to a height which might have excited a universal combination against him, had not his authority been so well-established. It is told of him that, while residing at Chester, and having purposed to go by water to the

<sup>1</sup> Hoved. 426.—Flor. Wigorn. 607.—Maitres Chron.

abbey of St John the Baptist, he obliged eight of his tributary princes who had come to do him homage—amongst whom are mentioned, Kenneth of Scotland, Malcolm of Cumbria, Maccus of Anglesey, &c.—to act as watermen, and row him, with his nobles and officers, in a barge down the Dee.<sup>2</sup> This degradation of their king, the Scottish historians strenuously deny; and assert that if ever he did acknowledge vassalage to Edgar, it was not for his crown, but for the dominions which he held in England.

The merits and glory of Edgar have been depicted in very favourable colours by the monks, of whom he was the liberal and obsequious patron. By them he is transmitted to us, not only under the character of a consummate statesman and an active prince—praises to which he seems to have been justly entitled—but under that of a great saint and a man of virtue, though the licentiousness of his manners contrasts strangely with the compliments of his flatterers. It was by paying court to Dunstan and his partisans who at first placed him on the throne, that he wore his crown in peace, and maintained the tranquillity of his dominions. His policy was bent to convert the clergy into monks, and to fill the country with Benedictine institutions. He seconded their scheme for dispossessing the secular canons of all the monasteries; he bestowed preferment on none but their adherents; he consulted their leaders in the administration of all church-matters, and even in most affairs of state; and though the vigour of his own genius hindered him from being implicitly guided by them, yet he always found it his interest to accord with their advice, and act in concert with their views. In order to complete the great work of placing the new order of monks in all the convents, Edgar summoned a general council or synod of the prelates, and other heads of the religious orders. After an artful prologue on the many blessings he enjoyed, and an inference that it was his duty in return to make his subjects religious, he proceeds to declare his anxiety for the ecclesiastical body. The speech draws a very unfavourable portrait of the secular clergy, and being rather curious, it may serve as a specimen not of the talents of the royal orator, but of the dissolute manners of the age.

“With your peace I speak, reverend fathers, that if you had watched these things (the morals of the clergy) with diligent scrutiny, such horrid and abominable proceedings of the clergy would not have reached our ears. I speak not of the neglecting the open crown, the suitable tonsure; but their loose garments, their insolent gestures, their turpitude of conversation; these display the madness of the inner man. So negligent in their offices, that they scarce deign to be present at the sacred vigils: when they approach the holy mass, it is to sport, not to worship. I affirm it—I affirm it, that the good will grieve, the bad laugh! I say it with sorrow, if indeed it can be spoken, that they give themselves up to such eating, and drunkenness, and impurities, that their houses seem the receptacles of prostitutes, the stages of buffoons. There are dice, dancing, singing, and riot, prolonged into midnight. Thus—thus are wasted the patrimony of kings, the alms of the poor, and what is more, the price of his precious blood, that their strumpets may be decorated, and feastings, dogs, and hawks, provided. The war-

<sup>2</sup> Malm. 56.—Hoved. 406.

rriors exclaim at these things, and the people murmur, but the profligate rejoice; and you—you neglect—you spare them—you dissemble! It is time to act against those who have counteracted the divine law. I have the sword of Constantine, you of Peter. Let us join sword to sword, that these lepers may be cast out, that the sanctuary may be purged, and that men may minister in the temple who can say to their parents, ‘I know you not’—to their brethren, ‘Ye are strangers to me.’ Act, I pray you, earnestly, that we may not repent of doing what we have done, nor of giving what we have bestowed! Let the relics of the saints which they insult, the altars before which they riot, move you. Let the wonderful devotion of our ancestors, whose alms these madmen abuse, affect you. Ethelwolf decimated his land for the church and monasteries. Alfred and Edward were liberal; so were my father and his brothers. O Dunstan! father of fathers! behold, I pray you, the eyes of my father looking down on you from yonder lucid sky; hear his lamenting voice sounding in your ears, grieved at such enormities. Thou, father Dunstan, hast given me wholesome counsel in raising monasteries and building churches; thou hast assisted, hast co-operated with me in all. I have chosen thee the bishop and shepherd of my soul, and the keeper of my morals. When have I not obeyed you? What treasures, what possessions have I withheld, when you requested? If you thought the poor should be assisted, I gave. If you complained that monks and churches were in need, I never denied. You told me that alms were an everlasting treasure; that nothing would be more profitable to me than my gifts to monasteries and churches. O illustrious charity! O worthy reward of the soul! O wholesome remedy for omissions! But is this the fruit of my benevolence? Are these the consequences of my desire, and your promises? How will you answer these complaints? I know—I know! When you saw a thief, you went not with him; nor did you place your portion among adulterers. You have argued, entreated, and reproached. Words have been despised; let us now come to blows. To you, then, I commit this business, that by the episcopal censures and the royal authority united, they who lead dissolute lives may be thrown out of the churches, and the regulars be introduced.”<sup>3</sup>

It is easy to imagine that this harangue had the desired effect; and that when the king and his prelates thus concurred with the popular prejudices, the monks soon prevailed and established their new discipline in the convents. A general persecution was commenced against the seculars; and such pride did Edgar take in promoting this Benedictine revolution, that, in 964, he boasted of having erected forty-seven monasteries, and declared his intention of increasing them to fifty.<sup>4</sup> That the lives of the clergy were unsuitable to their profession may be believed; but the declamations of the monks are a suspicious evidence. It was their business and their interest to misrepresent—to court popularity, by contrasting their own austerities with the indulgences of others, and stigmatise even their innocent enjoyments as great and unpardonable enormities, in order to prepare the way for the increase of their own power and influence. Like a true politician, Edgar sided with the prevailing party; and he even humoured them in pretensions which,

<sup>3</sup> Ethelred, 360, 361.—Collier, iii. 190.—Spelm. Concil. 479.

<sup>4</sup> Dugd. Mon. vol. i. p. 140.



though they might engage the monks to support the royal authority during his own reign, proved afterwards dangerous to his successors, and gave disturbance to the whole civil power. He seconded the policy of the court of Rome, in granting to some monasteries an exemption from episcopal jurisdiction. He allowed the convents, even those of royal foundation, to usurp the election of their own abbot; and he admitted the forgeries of ancient charters, by which, from the pretended grants of former kings, they assumed many privileges and immunities. These favours and indulgences procured him the highest panegyrics from the monks; yet nothing could more betray both his hypocrisy in inveighing against the licentiousness of the proscribed ecclesiastics, and the interested spirit of his partisans in bestowing such eulogies on his piety and virtues, than the usual tenor of his conduct, which was criminal to the last degree, and violated every law, human and divine. Though the eyes of the Benedictines were shut to his vices, and their tongues eloquent in his praise, this did not diminish their enormity. History, however, more faithful than the monastic annalists, has preserved some examples of his amours, from which a conjecture may be formed as to the rest.

The sanctity of the veil, even in the most barbarous times, was generally held to be an inviolable protection to the fair wearer; but in the indulgence of his passions, Edgar disregarded the restraints both of civil and religious institutions. He broke into a convent and carried off Wulfrith, a nun, and a lady of noble birth, and committed violence on her person.<sup>5</sup> For this act of sacrilege he was reprimanded by Dunstan. The indulgent father, however, did not compel him to separate from his mistress, but he required him to do penance to the church, by abstaining from wearing his crown during seven years, and thus depriving himself so long of that vain ornament,—a punishment very unequal to that which had been inflicted on the unfortunate Edwy, who, for a marriage which, in the strictest sense, could only deserve the name of irregular, was expelled his kingdom, saw his queen barbarously mangled, loaded with calumnies, and represented to the world under the most odious suspicions. Accident or rumour proved the cause of another illicit connexion. Happening to pass through Andover, he lodged in the house of a nobleman, whose daughter, being endowed with all the graces of person and behaviour, made so deep an impression on his heart, that he resolved, by any expedient, to gratify his lawless desires. Courtship, or even marriage, formed no part of his intentions, provided he could otherwise accomplish his purpose. He went immediately to the mother, declared the violence of his passion, and requested that the young lady might be allowed to pass that very night with him. The matron was a woman of strict virtue, and resolved not to ruin every hope in life, or dishonour her daughter and her family, by compliance with the transient humour of a libertine; but being well-aware of the impetuosity of the king's temper, and dreading the consequence of thwarting a tyrant's will, she thought it would be easier, as well as safer, to deceive than refuse him. She feigned, therefore, a submission to his wishes, but secretly ordered her attendant, a handsome waiting-maid, to personate her daughter, and

<sup>5</sup> Malin. 63.

steal into the king's bed-chamber when all the company had retired to rest. Darkness favoured the deception; but in the morning when the damsel, agreeably to the injunctions of her mistress, offered to retire, the king refused to permit her departure, and employed force and entreaties to detain her. The discovery of the fraud practised upon him, gave a new direction to his desires. From the daughter, his love was transferred to Elfeda—that was the name of the maid—whose charms had made a sudden and unexpected conquest of Edgar. She became his favourite mistress, and maintained her ascendancy over him till his marriage with Elfrida, the circumstances of which were more remarkable and more criminal than the preceding. This lady was daughter and heir of Olgar, or Ordgar, earl of Devonshire. Having been educated in the country, she had never made her appearance at court, but the fame of her beauty had filled all England. Edgar was far from being indifferent to rumours of this nature. His curiosity was inflamed by the frequent reports he heard in her praise; and reflecting on her noble birth, he determined, if he found her charms equal to their reputation, to obtain possession of her on honourable terms. This intention he imparted to his favourite, earl Athelwold, and sent him privately on a visit to Devonshire, on some pretext or other, to examine if the beauty of the lady was at all such as had been represented. Athelwold saw her, and found that the general report had fallen short of the truth. But the interview was fatal: it had inflamed him with the most vehement love, and he resolved to sacrifice to this new passion his fidelity to his master, and the trust committed to him. To Edgar he gave a very unfavourable account;—that it was the riches and high birth of the lady that must have been the reason of the admiration paid her; and that her charms, far from being in any way extraordinary, would have been overlooked in any woman of inferior station. Edgar was satisfied; and finding his thoughts diverted from this match, he took an opportunity of bespeaking the royal permission on his own behalf. He observed, that though the parentage and fortune of Elfrida had not produced on him, as on others, any illusion with regard to her beauty, he could not forbear reflecting that she would, on the whole, be an advantageous match for him, and might by her wealth and good qualities make him sufficient compensation for the homeliness of her person. Edgar, pleased with an expedient for advancing the worldly interests of his favourite, not only gave his approbation and exhorted him to execute his purpose, but forwarded his success by recommending him to the parents of the lady. The treacherous Athelwold was soon made happy in the possession of his mistress; and to avoid detection, he employed every artifice to detain her in the country, and especially to keep her from appearing at court. But favourites have many enemies. Athelwold was supplanted, and Edgar soon heard the truth. Before listening to the dictates of revenge, the king determined to satisfy himself with his own eyes, of the certainty and full extent of the earl's guilt. He informed him that he intended to pay him a visit in his castle, and be introduced to the acquaintance of his young wife. This honour it was impossible to decline, and Athelwold only craved leave to go before him a few hours, that his distinguished guest might have a more suitable reception. The whole matter was then revealed to Elfrida, and the trembling husband begged her, if she had any re-

gard either to her own honour or his life, to conceal from Edgar, by every circumstance of dress and behaviour, that fatal beauty which had seduced him from fidelity to his king, and had betrayed into so many falsehoods. Elfrida promised compliance, though nothing was farther from her intention. She saw herself, then, for the first time, deprived of a crown and a royal consort by the passion of a faithless messenger; and knowing the force of her own charms, she did not yet despair of reaching that dignity. Instead of slovenliness or disguise, she appeared before the king with all the advantages which the richest attire and the most engaging airs could bestow. At once she excited in the royal heart the strongest attachment towards herself, and the most furious desire of revenge against the perfidious husband. He knew, however, how to dissemble these passions, and seducing Athelwold into a wood on pretence of hunting, he stabbed him with his own hand, and soon after—in 965—publicly married Elfrida.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, amidst these defects, some traits of enlightened policy appear, which reflect credit on Edgar. The most important of these was his patronage of foreigners, who resorted to his court or his kingdom for the purposes of commerce. People from Saxony, Flanders, and Denmark, were attracted by his reputation or his encouragement; for he received them so well as to excite a censure from the monkish chroniclers, that he loved them too much.<sup>7</sup> The same authorities tell us, that they imported all the vices of their respective countries, and contributed to corrupt the simple manners of the natives; but as this simplicity of manners, so highly and often so injudiciously extolled, did not preserve them from cruelty and treachery—the most pernicious of all vices, and the most incident to a rude uncultivated people—we ought perhaps to deem their acquaintance with strangers rather an advantage, as it tended to enlarge their views, to extend their knowledge, and to cure them of those illiberal prejudices and rustic habits to which islanders are often subject. Edgar showed his care of trade by punishing, in a summary manner, the inhabitants of Thanet, who had seized and plundered some merchantmen coming from York. Another instance of his sound policy was the extirpation of wolves from England. He had taken great pains in hunting and pursuing these ravenous animals; and when he found that such as had escaped him had taken shelter in the mountains and forests of Wales, he exchanged the tribute of money, imposed on the Welsh princes by Athelstan, into three hundred wolves' heads annually.<sup>8</sup> Such was their diligence in destroying them, that in four years the tribute ceased for want of supply, and these ferocious animals have never since then been seen in this island. His reformation of the coinage was also a prudent measure. It had become so diminished in weight by the fraud of clipping, that the actual value was very inferior to the nominal. He therefore ordered new coins to be struck all over England. He was most attentive to the wants of the poor—the dictate of superstition, perhaps, rather than of charity; and his vigilant police freed the kingdom from robbers. Edgar, though tyrannical, was generous to his friends. To Kenneth, king of Scotland, who visited him,

<sup>6</sup> Lingard affects to doubt this story, and the preceding, both of which are given on the authority of Malmesbury.

<sup>7</sup> Hunt. 356.

<sup>8</sup> Malin. 32.—Carad. 56.



he not only ceded the district of Lothian, extending from the Tweed to the Forth, but gave one hundred ounces of pure gold, and many silken ornaments, with rings and precious stones.<sup>9</sup> An anecdote of these princes is recorded descriptive of the energetic character of Edgar. His person was small and thin, and by no means indicative of his mental powers. Kenneth happened one day carelessly to remark, that it was wonderful so many provinces should obey a man so insignificant. These words were carried to the king; he immediately conducted the offender apart into a wood, and producing two weapons, bade him take his choice. "Our arms shall decide," said he, "which ought to obey the other; for it will be base to have asserted that at a feast, which you cannot support with your sword."<sup>10</sup> It was one of the conditions on which Kenneth received the county of Louth, that he should come every year to Edgar's principal feast; and for his accommodation several houses were provided for his entertainment during his journey. The hasty remark that had incurred the royal displeasure was brought to his recollection by this appeal to the laws of honour; he apologised for it as a joke, and the matter ended amicably.

Edgar expired in the thirty-third year of his age. He was twice married. By Elfreda, his first wife, he had Edward his successor, and a daughter, who became a nun. Elfrida bore him two sons, Edmund, who died before him, and Ethelred. This monarch, as an acute historian has remarked, was rather the king of a great nation in a fortunate era, than a great prince himself. His actions display a character ambiguous and mixed. In some things he was liberal to profusion, in others mean, arrogant and vicious. His reign has been celebrated as the most glorious of all the Anglo-Saxon kings; but some allowance must be made for the hyperbolic praises of monastic gratitude by which it has been emblazoned. No other sovereign, indeed, converted his greatness into such personal pomp; and no other, we may add, was more unfortunate in his posterity. With his short life the gaudy pageant ceased; and all the vast dominions in which he had so ostentatiously exulted, vanished from his children's grasp. His eldest son perished by the intrigue of his beloved Elfrida,—another fell by the hand of an assassin,—and his youngest reigned only to show his own imbecility, and ruin the nation he had attempted to govern. On the whole, recollecting the advantages and facilities which Edgar inherited, we must say that it was the fortuitous chronology of his existence, rather than his own talents or wisdom, that has adorned his name with a celebrity, which less favourable circumstances denied to his predecessors.

<sup>9</sup> The Northumbrian kings had extended their conquest to the Forth (Bede iv. 26), but there is little reason to believe that the possession of Lothian was easily retained at this time. Perhaps Kenneth demanded the cession of this district as a right rather than solicited it as a favour. Certain it is that it was finally ceded to him on the single condition that its inhabitants should be permitted to retain their language, laws, and customs. "Does not this sufficiently account," inquires Lingard, "for the prevalence of the English language in the Lowlands of Scotland?"

<sup>10</sup> Malm. 59.

## Edward the Martyr.

BORN A. D. 959.—DIED A. D. 978.

EDWARD, surnamed the Martyr, was only fifteen years of age at the time of his father Edgar's death in 975. Though the eldest surviving son, his accession did not take place without much difficulty and opposition. He had indeed the advantage of being nominated successor in his father's will; he was approaching manhood, and might soon be able to take the reins of government into his own hands; he had the support of the principal nobility, who dreaded the imperious temper and ambitious aims of Elfrida; and as he seemed inclined to subserve the views of the new monks, his interest was espoused by Dunstan, whose character for sanctity had given him the highest credit with the people. But he had formidable obstacles on the other hand to encounter. Elfrida his step-mother attempted to secure the throne for her son, Ethelred, a child of seven years old. She affirmed that Edgar's marriage with the mother of Edward was liable to insuperable objections; and as she had possessed great influence with her husband, she had found means to attract adherents who seconded all her pretensions. Even in the church a faction had risen against him. Dunstan had succeeded in excluding the ancient ecclesiastics from their seats; but he had not reconciled the whole nation to the severity of the measure, or to his own administration; and on the death of the late king, an attempt was made to humble his power, and to restore the clergy. It was of vast importance to this aspiring prelate and the monks, to place on the throne a king favourable to their cause; and to cut off all hostile pretensions, Dunstan, as executor of the king's will, resolutely anointed and crowned the young prince at Kingston.<sup>1</sup> This bold measure superseded the claims of Ethelred, and the whole country submitted to him without farther dispute. The quarrel, however, between the two religious systems became more vehement; and though Dunstan had got Edward crowned, he could not recover the alienated minds of the nobles whom his innovations and his arrogance had provoked. The secular clergy had many partisans in England who wished to support them in the possessions of their convents and of the ecclesiastical authority. On the first intelligence of Edgar's death, the governor or duke of Mercia expelled the Benedictine order from all the monasteries within his jurisdiction;<sup>2</sup> while the dukes of East Anglia and Essex protected them within their respective territories, and insisted on the execution of the laws enacted in their favour. Nothing but tumult and confusion ensued. Elfrida joined the party of the seculars who had got hold of the monastic possessions, which they distributed to the governors in return for their support. Dunstan, on the other hand, expelled the clergy who had been reinstated; and to quiet the discontent which his violence had excited, as well as to maintain his own ascendancy, he had recourse to an infallible test in times of ignorance,—the miraculous aid of superstition. Different synods were convened, which, according to the practice of the age, consisted partly of ecclesiastics, and partly of nobility; yet the

<sup>1</sup> Mailros Chron. 151.—Eadmeri Vit. 220.

<sup>2</sup> Ingulf. 54.—Malm. 61.

Benedictine party might have been foiled, for the secret wishes, if not the declared sentiments of the leading men in the nation appear to have been against them, had they not had recourse to invention and pious forgeries to sustain their cause. The reputation of their pretended sanctity made their miracles the more easily swallowed by the populace. By such proceedings, Dunstan taught others to fight him with his own weapons, by practising similar crimes. Edward was subjected to his power, but the ambitious Elfrida still cherished the guilty wish of elevating her son, and unfortunately the divided state of the kingdom and the vindictive spirit of the nobility gave power to her malice. The death of Edward was conspired, as the only avenue to the completion of her hopes. And what adds to the infamy and the hardened enormity of her conduct, is the uniform kindness with which that prince had always treated her. Though she had opposed his succession, he always showed her marks of great regard. He gave her all Dorsetshire as a dower, with a royal dignity annexed to it, and towards her son he expressed on every occasion the most tender affection.

The fate of this amiable but too confiding prince was memorable and tragical, and his own unsuspecting temper facilitated the execution of the plot; for being endowed with an amiable innocence of manners, and having no impure intentions of his own, he was incapable of entertaining suspicion against others. He was one day hunting in Dorsetshire, near Wareham, a few miles from which stood Corfe-Castle, the residence of Elfrida and her son. His companions were dispersed in pursuit of the game, and, in the course of his sport, Edward approached the conspicuous walls of the mansion. Thither he rode unattended, to pay a visit to the young prince and his mother. His arrival presented her with the opportunity which she had so long sought. The plan was hastily settled. The king was received with apparent kindness, and invited to enter; but he declined to alight, merely desiring some refreshment, and requesting to see his brother. A cup of mead was brought him, and while raising the liquor to his lips, a wretch, the servant of Elfrida, stealing behind, stabbed him in the back. Feeling himself wounded, he put spurs to his horse to escape the assassin, or hurry in quest of his companions. But the dagger had been too successful; becoming faint with loss of blood, he fell from the saddle, his foot stuck in the stirrup, and the frightened steed dragged him along till he expired. His friends tracked his course by the blood; the mangled body was found and privately interred at Wareham, by his servants. It was soon after removed and buried at Shaftesbury, by Dunstan and the governor of Mercia.<sup>3</sup> Thus fell Edward the Martyr, by 'the foulest deed,' as the chronicles of the time say, that ever stained the English name. He was in the fourth year of his reign, and the nineteenth of his age.

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. 124, 125.—Malm. 34.



## Ethelred.

BORN A. D. 970.—DIED A. D. 1016.

ETHELRED succeeded to the throne in 979; but the means by which he obtained the crown had an unfavourable effect on his reputation and his reign. Historians have given him the epithet of the Unready; but the appellation appears to have been suggested not from any act of his own, but, almost as soon as he was born, by Dunstan's malevolence; for, when he took Ethelred from the font, he exclaimed with his usual vehemence, that "the babe would prove a man of nought;" and he never concealed the dislike which he entertained towards the son of Elfrida. The triumph of the murderer of Edward was short; and in attempting to subvert the daring prelate by such a deed she failed. Dunstan retained his dignity, and even his popular influence; for what nation could be so depraved as to patronise a woman who, at her own gate, had caused her step-son to be assassinated? After no long interval, Dunstan excited the public odium and the terrors of guilt so successfully against her, that she became overwhelmed with shame, and took refuge in the vail and in building nunneries from that abhorrence which will never forsake her memory. There is no reason to suppose that Ethelred, a child of eleven years of age, had in any way aided or assented to the murder of his brother; and, when the nobles and clergy had acknowledged him king, according to the usages of the constitution, Dunstan, whatever may have been his private dislike, was compelled to assist at the ceremony. Probably he might have set up a pretender, if any such could have been found; but Ethelred was the only remaining scion of the royal stem. But he showed the spirit of opposition that rankled in his bosom; for, when he placed the crown on the head of the youthful monarch, he accompanied it by a curse:—"Even as by the death of thy brother thou didst aspire to the kingdom, hear the decree of heaven. The sin of thy wicked mother, and of her accomplices, shall rest upon thy head; and such evils shall fall upon the English as they have never yet suffered from the days when they first came into the isle of Britain, even until the present time."<sup>1</sup> These invectives were a most inauspicious augury for a new reign; and his imprecations, though they arose obviously out of his aversion towards the prevailing party, had a very deleterious influence on the nation. The prophecy, like many others, was well-calculated to insure its own accomplishment. By persuading the people to attribute their misfortunes to the government, he weakened their power of resistance so long as Ethelred was on the throne; and he also directly instigated them to desert their monarch as the cause of the evils to which they were exposed. Accordingly, the great national honour and felicity which had accumulated under his predecessors, dwindled away from the period of his accession. The splendid prospects grew darker and darker, until the night of calamity settled down with all its horrors. Its approach was foretold and invited by a disordered country, a di-

<sup>1</sup> Ingulf. 506.

vided court, and an incapable sovereign. England was already prepared to succumb to any foreign enemy; and the misery and confusion which ensued, and which, in fact, opened the way for the entire subjugation of the country by the Normans, if not occasioned by the very words of Dunstan, were yet extremely enhanced by the effect of his denunciation. Ethelred, deprived of the confidence of his subjects, could not lead them to their own defence; and their distrust of their sovereign involved the whole state in a sort of anarchy.

For a considerable time, England had enjoyed a happy freedom from the depredations of the Danes, who had changed the scene of their piracies to the north of France. The repression of their excursions, like the damming of water, had accumulated an overgrown population at home; and these inherited from their fathers the same inveterate habits of war and plunder. A favourable era had occurred, and the second year of Ethelred's reign was distinguished by the re-appearance of those enemies whom the courage and wisdom of Alfred and his successors had exiled from the English coast. By way of experiment, seven vessels landed near Southampton, where the robbers having laid waste the country, and enriched themselves with spoil, departed with impunity. The leader of this expedition appears to have been Sweyn, the son of the king of Denmark. Banished from home by his father, he was in the full vigour of youth; and the assistance he had at his command rendered him a formidable invader to a country unprepared for defence either in the council-hall or in the field. Next year another detachment of the northern host invaded Mercia; Chester was taken, London was burnt, and the whole coast from the Mersey to the Thames was ravaged by these insatiable plunderers. Still the Danes did not act in concert with each other; and their fleets, or rather their squadrons, were frequently very small. Thus Dorsetshire was invaded by three ships; and if we estimate their crews at six hundred men, we shall probably overrate their numbers. Any reasonable degree of vigour would have been sufficient to repel so contemptible a force. The kingdom was flourishing in abundant population; its military strength was entire, and its government was undisputed; but its administration was in weak hands; and, at a time when unanimity was requisite, great dissension prevailed. While the country was smoking with the fires kindled by the invaders, Ethelred was engaged in petty disputes with his subjects. He had quarrelled with the bishop of Rochester, and ravaged the lands belonging to that see, and even laid siege to the town; but, on receiving payment of a sum of money, he desisted from further hostilities. About the same time Alfric, governor or earl of Mercia, a powerful but treacherous nobleman, had engaged in a conspiracy against Ethelred. He was condemned by the Wittenagemot; his property was confiscated, and he himself being outlawed, was banished from the country. The only part of England in which the Danes met with any effectual resistance was in East-Anglia. In 991 a large force, commanded by Justin and Gurthmund, attacked Ipswich,<sup>2</sup> and advanced through the defenceless country as far as Milden. Here Brithnoth, governor of Essex, bravely opposed them with a small body of warriors; but they were defeated, the noble chief himself

<sup>2</sup> Turner's *Angl. Sax. Hist.* vol. iii. p. 228.

being slain. The spoilers extended their devastation unmolested; so completely had courage and patriotism already departed from England. In this extremity Ethelred, instead of rousing his subjects to increased activity, or marching at the head of a new army, adopted the shameful expedient of buying off the invaders. Siric, archbishop of Canterbury, and successor of Dunstan, was the adviser of this unworthy and fatal measure. His argument was, that as the Danes only came for booty, it would be wiser to give them what they wanted; and in this pusillanimous opinion he was joined by many of the degenerate nobles. Ethelred accordingly purchased their retreat at the expensive bribe of ten thousand pounds.<sup>3</sup> The effect of this imprudence was such as might have been anticipated. The Danes departed; but they appeared next year in greater numbers off the eastern coast. The bribe that had gratified their own avarice told them that England abounded with gold, but that her warlike spirit was no more. It was like a beacon of attraction planted on her cliffs, encouraging needy adventurers to plunder with impunity, and retire with wealth. This concession laid the foundation of a permanent burden on the country; for, it is noticed by the annalists of the time, as having produced the evil of direct taxation, the tribute of Dane-gelt being raised by assessments on the land. "We now pay (says a chronicler of the twelfth century) that from custom which terror first extorted from the Danes."<sup>4</sup> The impositions were not remitted when the necessity had ceased to exist.

Ethelred, meanwhile, became sensible of his mistake, and when sober reflection had time to operate, the right means of defence were put in action. The Witan, or great council of the nation, had assembled, as being determined to give battle to the enemy; and a powerful fleet was constructed at London, and well-manned with chosen troops. But the wisdom of this measure was again baffled by the treachery of the person selected for the command. This was no other than Alfric, who, during his banishment, had employed every intrigue that could either restore him to his former independence, or prevent every success that might tend to establish the royal authority.<sup>5</sup> If the exile of this turbulent chief was a proof of the rebellious spirit of Ethelred's nobles, his speedy restoration to the government of Mercia was a still greater evidence of the weak and vacillating policy of the court. The English had formed the plan of surrounding and destroying the Danish fleet in harbour, but the whole scheme was foiled by the perfidious Alfric, who privately informed the enemy of their danger, and when, in consequence of this intelligence, they quitted their station and put to sea, he consummated his villany by deserting to them, with the squadron under his command, the night before the engagement. The rest of the Anglo-Saxons pursued but could only overtake one vessel. Another division however met, and bravely attacked some of the enemy's ships before they could reach the harbour. The capture of Alfric's vessel crowned their victory, but its ruthless master with some difficulty effected his escape, and was again replaced in his honours. This instance of gross perfidy Ethelred avenged by seizing his son Alfgar, and ordering his

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. 126.—Hoved. 245.—Wilk. L.L. Sax.

<sup>4</sup> Hunt. 357.

<sup>5</sup> Chron. Sax. 127.—Malm. 35.



eyes to be put out,—a cruel punishment of the innocent, for the misdeeds of the guilty.<sup>6</sup>

Next year fresh swarms of invaders, from Denmark and Norway, were precipitated on the shores of England, under the renowned kings Sweyn, and Olave or Olaus. Sailing up the Humber, they spread their devastations through Lincolnshire on the one hand, and Northumbria on the other. A numerous army was assembled to oppose them, and a general action ensued, but the English were deserted in the battle by the cowardice or treachery of their three leaders, all of them of Danish extraction, who gave the example of a shameful flight to the troops under their command. From thence the pirates ventured to attack the centre of the kingdom; and entering the Thames in ninety-four vessels, laid siege to London, but the bravery of the citizens compelled the assailants to desist. Though repulsed here, they laid waste Essex, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire; and having procured horses, they were thereby enabled to spread the fury of their outrages through the more inland districts. In this extremity, Ethelred and his nobles had recourse to their former expedient. Instead of meeting them on the field, he sent to know the sum that would stop their depredations. Sweyn and Olave agreed to the terms, and peaceably took up their quarters at Southampton, where sixteen thousand pounds were paid them, literally for the purpose of inviting them to further mischief. Every payment thus made, told them that a repetition of the same aggressions would lead to a similar compliance on the part of the enemy. It was a stipulation in the treaty, that Olave should be baptized; he was invited to Ethelred's court at Andover, where he was treated with honour, and during his visit he received the Christian rite of confirmation, and was dismissed with rich presents. He here promised that he would never more infest the English territories, and he faithfully kept his engagement.<sup>7</sup>

The army of Sweyn had wintered at Southampton; after three years' respite they renewed their excursions. They entered the Severn and having committed spoil in Wales, Cornwall, and Devonshire, sailed round to the south coast to complete the devastation of these two counties. Spreading themselves eastward, they ravaged the isle of Wight, entered the Thames and the Medway, and laid siege to Rochester, where they defeated the Kentish men in a pitched battle. The weakness of the king, and the treachery or want of concert among the nobility, frustrated every endeavour to arrest the progress of slaughter and burning. Again they offered to "buy peace," and another precarious truce was purchased for twenty-four thousand pounds, together with the usual condition, more degrading still, of "feeding" these insatiable invaders who wasted and impoverished the country.<sup>8</sup> Fifty thousand pounds had now been paid as *Dane-gelt*.<sup>9</sup> Each pound, as we learn from a modern writer of antiquarian research, was then equivalent, in weight of silver, to somewhat more than three pounds of our nominal currency. But the intrinsic worth affords no adequate measure of its real value, and the worth of fifty thousand pounds in the reign of Ethelred, will be under-

<sup>6</sup> Flor. 366.—Malm. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Malm. 63.—Chron. Sax. 129.

<sup>8</sup> Chron. Sax. 142.

<sup>9</sup> *Dane-gold*, *Dane-geold*, in Latin *Dane-geldum*. The name was also given to a tax levied for the payment of those forces which were raised to resist the Danes.

stood by knowing that this sum would have purchased about one million two hundred thousand acres of arable land, together with such rights and privileges in the common lands and woods belonging to the inclosed lands, as may be considered to have trebled the superficial admeasurement.<sup>10</sup>

About the year 1000 two circumstances seemed to operate in favour of the spiritless Ethelred. A quarrel had arisen between Sweyn and Olave, and their respective forces came to action near the island of Wollin. But the bravery of Olave could not compensate for his great inferiority of numbers. His ship was surrounded, and disdaining to be taken prisoner, he leapt into the sea, and disappeared from the pursuit: thus giving room for the wild legends of the north to suppose his escape, and cherish him a living recluse on some distant shore.<sup>11</sup> Another diversion which augured well for England, was the departure of the Danes for Normandy, where they had been invited by their countrymen, at that time hard pressed by the arms of Robert king of France. At the same time, with a view of strengthening his interest by foreign alliance, he married Emma sister to Richard II. duke of Normandy.

It was shortly after this match, on the 'Mass day,'—November 13th, 1002,—that Ethelred gave the fatal order to massacre all the Danes within his dominions that were subject to his power. This wicked act, as useless as imbecility could devise, and as sanguinary as cowardice could perpetrate, arose out of a most mischievous policy. From the reign of Athelstan the kings of Wessex had been accustomed to encourage the resort of Danish adventurers, whom they retained as their own body-guard or household troops. It is said that the kings exerted the prerogative of quartering one of these satellites in every house. This circumstance, while it extended the massacre, rendered its execution more practicable. Secret letters from the king were despatched to every city, commanding the people at an appointed hour, on the day of the festival of St Brice, when the Danes usually bathed themselves, to fall upon them suddenly, and either destroy them by the sword, or consume them with fire. This order was the more atrocious, as the Danes were living peaceably with the Anglo-Saxons, and, as Malmsbury says, it was miserable to see every one betray his guest. The command, horrible as it was, met with a ready obedience. All the Danes dispersed throughout England, their wives and families, even their youngest infants, were butchered without mercy. The rage of the populace excited by so many injuries, sanctioned by authority, and stimulated by example, made no distinction between innocence and guilt, spared neither age nor sex, and was not satiated without the torture, as well as death of the unhappy victims. Even those who had intermarried with the families who received them were not exempted from this inhuman proscription. Gunhilda, the sister of Sweyn, a woman of high spirit and beauty, who had espoused an English earl and embraced Christianity, was by the advice of Edric, earl of Wilts, seized and condemned to death by Ethelred, after witnessing her husband and son slain in her presence. She foretold in the agonies of despair the consequences of the bloody tragedy, and that her murder would soon be avenged by the total ruin

<sup>10</sup> Palgrave's Hist. vol. I. p. 287.

<sup>11</sup> Chron. Sax. 127—129.—Saxo. Gram. 184—189.—Snorre. 334—345.

of the English nation.<sup>12</sup> Never was prophecy better fulfilled; and never did barbarous policy prove more fatal to the authors. Strange as it may seem, that a plot so extensive should be planned and executed without discovery, yet this is not one of those stories of atrocity concerning which any scepticism can be indulged. There is no doubting or denying its reality. William the Conqueror afterwards employed 'the murder of St Brice's day,' as a watch-word or incentive to his Norman nobles, in urging them to avenge the blood of their kinsmen. The intelligence conveyed to Sweyn was an additional stimulus to renew hostilities; nor did he long delay the provoked invasion. Next year (1003) he appeared off the western coast, and threatened to take ample revenge for the slaughter of his countrymen. Exeter fell into his hands from the negligence or treachery of Earl Hugh, a Norman, who had been made governor by the interest of Queen Emma. He proceeded through the country to Wilts where the Anglo-Saxons met him; but the command of the troops had been intrusted to Alfric, already notorious for his perfidy, and his misconduct again frustrated the chance of success. The instant the battle was about to commence he affected a sudden illness and declined the contest. Disgusted and disappointed at the desertion of their leader, the English fell into disorder and abandoned the field. Alfric soon after died, and was succeeded both in his civil and military capacity by Edric, a greater traitor than he, who had married the king's daughter and had gained a total ascendancy over him. For four years in succession did the Danes repeat their incursions, until the country was reduced to the brink of extreme misery. The wretchedness of the inhabitants was at the same time aggravated by a severe famine, arising partly from the bad seasons, and partly from the decay of agriculture; as the face of the country was every where overspread with "fire, flame, and desolation." The means were far from being exhausted of exterminating the Danish invaders, had the government been competent to put them in action. But the picture of imbecility and misrule exceeds belief. Every annalist and every writer on the period, have laboured to convey to their readers the sad impression which their minds had received from the spectacle of a nation plunged into calamities so unjustifiably. The words of Turketul to Sweyn are short but descriptive: "A country," says he, "illustrious and powerful; a king asleep, solicitous only about women and wine, and trembling at war, hated by his people, and derided by strangers; generals envious of each other; and weak governors, ready to fly at the first shout of battle."<sup>13</sup> A sermon has been preserved, preached by an Anglo-Saxon bishop of the time, Lupus, to his unhappy contemporaries, in which he has left a dismal portrait of the condition of England under the reign of Ethelred. As this prelate spake from what he saw and felt, his description is the more valuable, being replete with life and reality, and therefore interesting, far beyond the lamentations of a distant writer. The evils complained of by Lupus, are either those flowing immediately from hostile invasions, those which sprung from bad government, or those arising from the moral depravity consequent on so wretched a state of affairs. Speaking of the Danes, he pathetically remarks: "We perpetually pay them tribute,

<sup>12</sup> Malm. 64.—Chron. Sax. 133.—Hoved. 429.

<sup>13</sup> Malm. 69.



and they ravage us daily. They devastate and they burn; they spoil, they plunder, and they carry off our property to their ships. Such is their successful valour, that one of them will in battle put ten of ours to flight. Two or three will drive a troop of captive Christians through the country from sea to sea. Nay, often they seize the wives and daughters of our thanes, and cruelly violate them before the brave chieftain's face. The slave of yesterday becomes the master of his lord to-day; or he flees to the ranks of his countrymen and seeks the life of his owner in the earliest battle. Soldiers, famine, flames and effusion of blood, abound on every side. Theft and murder, plague and pestilence, mortality and disease, calumny, hatred, rapine and the ferocity of our enemies dreadfully afflict us." The evils resulting from misgovernment he enumerates at great length: widows frequently compelled into unjust marriages,—the poor betrayed,—children made slaves, and exported to foreign markets. He says that for many years men had been careless of their actions and words. He complains of the prevalence of perjury, contempt of solemn contracts, and various deceits. He describes the nation as consisting of murderers, parricides and priest-slayers; of men who betray their superiors, of apostates and assassins. He mentions the promiscuous crimes of the sexes, villanies, peculations, the slaughter of infants, witchcraft, seditions, plots, and the entire neglect of religious observances.<sup>14</sup> This horrid portrait may be a little too highly coloured; but the general outline is corroborated by the various annalists of the time; and as a sketch of the manners and social vices of the age, its truth is unfortunately placed beyond all doubt. In a country so degraded and disorganized, it was vain to expect any firm or effective struggle for independence. Truce after truce was purchased by enormous exactions. In 1007, the Danes obtained a payment of £36,000; and next year the listless king oppressed his subjects with fresh imposts. But the pride of the nation was deeply wounded, and the cessation of hostilities was employed in making preparations against the return of the invaders. By law, every proprietor of eight hydes of land was bound to provide a horseman, armed with hauberk and helmet. Every three hundred and ten hydes were assessed to build and equip one vessel, for the defence of the coast; and as the hydes in England, according to the best enumeration of them which exists, amounted to 243,600, the navy must have consisted of nearly eight hundred ships, and suits of armour furnished for upwards of 30,000 men.<sup>15</sup> This assessment of Ethelred may be viewed as the remote origin of the well-known tax of *ship-money*, so fatal to the despotism of the race of the Stuarts. This vast armament, in addition to the ancient national militia, was sufficient to have driven the Danes for ever from the British shores. But all hopes of its success were disappointed by the factious animosities and dissensions of the nobility. Edric, the new duke of Mercia, had instigated his brother Brightric to prefer an accusation of treason against Wolfnorth, governor of Sussex, father of the famous earl Godwin; and that nobleman, well-acquainted with the malevolence as well as the power of his enemy, found no means of safety but in deserting with twenty ships to the Danes. Brightric pursued him with eighty sail,

<sup>14</sup> See Hicke's *Dissertatio Epistolaris*, 99—106.

<sup>15</sup> Turner's *Angl. Sax. Hist.* vol. iii. p. 249

but being overtaken by a tempest, his fleet was shattered and stranded on the coast. There he was suddenly attacked by Wolfnoth, who burnt and destroyed all his vessels. The rest dispersed and retired, and thus perished the hopes of England. The feeble Ethelred was little capable of repairing this misfortune. The remainder of his reign presents us with nothing but the sacking and burning of towns, the devastation of the open country, and the ravages of the enemy in every quarter of the kingdom. In 1010, the triumph of the Danes was completed in the surrender of sixteen counties, and the payment of £48,000. This measure did not bring the harassed inhabitants that short interval of repose, which they had expected from it. Disregarding all engagements, the invaders returned next year, levied a new contribution of eight thousand pounds on the county of Kent alone, and murdered the archbishop of Canterbury for refusing to countenance their exactions.<sup>16</sup>

As a last resource, the English were compelled every where to submit to the Danish monarch by swearing allegiance to him, and delivering hostages for their fidelity.<sup>17</sup> This revolution in the government took place in 1013. Master of the northern districts, Sweyn, committed the charge of them to his son Canute, and immediately commenced a visit of decisive conquest to the south. Oxford and Winchester accepted his dominion, and London only resisted, because Ethelred was in it. But the presence of the enemy and the desertion of his own subjects soon compelled him to fly. He escaped into Normandy, having already sent his queen and his two sons Alfred and Edward before him. In six weeks the death of Sweyn, at Gainsborough, revived the hopes of his party, and a deputation of the clergy and nobility invited Ethelred to return. But the Danish soldiers had appointed Canute for their king, and he was determined to maintain his father's honour and authority by the sword. He was confronted by a powerful force of the English; and in revenge for their opposition, he committed an act at once barbarous and impolitic. Sailing from East Anglia he landed the hostages—all children of the first nobility whom his father had received as pledges for the obedience of the natives at Sandwich—and there he cruelly maimed them of their hands and noses.<sup>18</sup> The necessity of his interests and of increasing his army, called him to Denmark, and his return was signalized by fresh depredations. The whole of the southern coast was plundered, and he even extended his incursions into the counties of Dorset, Wilts, and Somerset, where an army was assembled against him under the command of Prince Edmund and Duke Edric. But all these preparations for defence were rendered unavailing by the timidity of Ethelred, who, instead of placing himself at the head of his troops, remained inactive in London under pretence of sickness. This city was now the last fortress of English liberty, and here Edmund determined to make a last stand, but the death of Ethelred threw every thing into confusion. He expired on St George's day, in the year 1016, and in the thirty-fifth of his inglorious and calamitous reign. By his first marriage he left two sons, Edmund and Edwy; the latter was murdered by Canute. The two sons by his second marriage, were immediately on his decease conveyed into Normandy by queen Emma.

The reign of Ethelred is a theme displeasing to the historian. He

<sup>16</sup> Vita Elfegi, 140.

<sup>17</sup> Chron. Sax. 143.

<sup>18</sup> Flor. 382.

was but ten years of age when he attained the crown. He began with ill omens, and Dunstan's curse appears to have constantly haunted his recollection. His want of firmness and resolution has been ascribed to an incident that happened in his youth. The tears of affection which, in the amiableness of his disposition, he shed for the assassination of the martyred Edward, was construed by the stern Elfrida into a reproach against herself. In the heat of indignation she seized a waxen candle which was near, and beat the terrified infant with a dreadful severity, which left him almost lifeless. The anguish he suffered he never could forget; and it is even affirmed, that during the remainder of his life he could not endure the presence of a light. By his pusillanimity and want of success he lost his character as a king, and the vices of the man did not redeem the defects of the sovereign. He neglected his Norman queen; and while his subjects at large suffered from his injustice, his nearest kindred dreaded his violence and rapacity. The writers of the times have painted Ethelred as a tall handsome man, elegant in manners, beautiful in countenance, and of a prepossessing figure and address. Malmesbury sarcastically observes, that he would have made a fine sleeping portrait; a pretty ornament for a lady's cabinet, though unfit to preside in a council. However deficient in the qualities essential to a great monarch, his incapacity has perhaps been exaggerated. Much of it arose from the untoward situation in which he was placed. His efforts were paralysed by the treachery of his officers; he trusted and was betrayed. Had he possessed less confidence in them, and more courage and energy in himself, many of the disasters that left a stain on his memory, and brought his country under the yoke of a foreign master, might have been prevented. His subjects would have fought better had he been their general as well as their king.

## Edmund Ironside.

SUCCEEDED TO THE THRONE A. D. 1016.—DIED EOD. ANN.

EDMUND, the eldest son and successor of Ethelred, succeeded his father in 1016. He received the name of Ironside from his hardy valour. Had he obtained the crown earlier, he possessed courage and abilities sufficient to have prevented his country from sinking into those calamities, but not to raise it from that abyss of misery into which it had already fallen. At the time of his accession he appears to have been in London; and the citizens, together with such of the Witan as were assembled there, forthwith accepted him as their lawful king. In better times he might have wielded the sceptre with dignity to himself and prosperity to his people; but it was his misfortune that he took the helm in a stormy season; and, before his character and talents could operate to assuage the tempest, he was assaulted with the hostilities of a rival perhaps greater than himself. The versatility of Anglo-Saxons in accommodating themselves to political circumstances is curious, and a lamentable proof of their degeneracy. But a little while since, they had recalled Ethelred from France, and outlawed the Danes for ever; now they again declared that they withdrew all allegiance from the



children of Ethelred; they accepted Canute as king, and took the oath of fidelity to him; and Canute, on his part, promised that he would govern according to law human and divine. No feeling of personal dislike could exist towards Edmund Ironside, who, on all occasions, is mentioned with praise. With his father's opportunities, at the head of a tranquil, prosperous, and united people, he might have foiled the abilities of Canute. But he assumed the crown amidst a race of disorderly, uncivilized, exhausted, and factious subjects, half of whose territory was in actual possession of the enemy. He had no interval of respite to recruit his strength or reform his country; and he was basely cut off in the full career of his exertions. In elevating a foreigner to the throne, to the exclusion of their native prince, the convention at Southampton acted irregularly, and gave evidence of that treachery and discontent of which Ethelred constantly complained, and their proceedings show that new ideas of monarchical government were beginning to creep in. The assembly considered themselves as competent to alter the succession, to set aside the ancient line, and transfer the crown to another dynasty, demanding at the same time a promise from the new sovereign, that he would rule according to law and justice. As usual on contested successions, the question of the royal title was referred to the sword. The first important struggle between Edmund and Canute was for the possession of London. The Thames was covered with the Danish fleet, and the siege was carried on for a long time in vain, sometimes by a part of Canute's forces, and sometimes by the whole. London was, in those days, defended on the south by a wall, which extended along the river; on the south bank, the Danes erected a strong military work, and they drew up their ships on the west side of the bridge, so as to interrupt all access to the city. But Edmund possessed all the qualifications of a resolute and vigilant chief. He made a vigorous resistance, and when his presence was required elsewhere, the bravery of the citizens repelled the efforts of the besiegers. While London was thus beleaguered with a hostile fleet, Edmund fought two battles in the country,—one at Pen, in Dorsetshire, the other and more celebrated one at Seearston or Sherston, in Gloucestershire. The latter took place about mid-summer, and was fought with determined obstinacy on both sides. Edmund selected his bravest soldiers for the first line of attack, and placed the rest as auxiliary bodies; then noticing many of them, individually, he appealed to their patriotism and their courage with that force of eloquence which rouses men to mighty deeds. He conjured them to remember their country, their beloved families and paternal habitations; for all these they were to fight,—for all these they would conquer. To rescue or lose for ever those dear objects of their attachment would be the alternative of that day's struggle. He represented to them their country overrun, their kindred massacred, and the insolence of oppression everywhere triumphant. In the height of the enthusiasm which his address had created, he commanded the trumpets to sound, and the charge of battle to begin. Boldly they rushed against the invaders, and were nobly led by their heroic king. He quitted his royal station to mingle in the foremost ranks of the combat; and, while his sword strewn the plain with slaughter, his active mind watched with eagerness every movement of the enemy. He endeavoured to blend the

duty of commander with the gallant bearing of the soldier. On the first day of the conflict, fortune seemed equally poised,—both armies fought with unprevailing courage, until mutual fatigue compelled them to separate. In the morning the carnage was renewed. In the thickest of the battle Edmund forced his way to Canute, and struck at him vehemently with his sword. The shield of the Dane saved him from the blow; but it was given with such strength that it divided the shield, and cut the neck of the horse below it. Canute was but slightly wounded; and a crowd of Danes having rushed on Edmund, he was compelled to retire after committing great slaughter. The defeat of the enemy seemed now inevitable, but for the treachery of Edric who had joined the banner of Canute. He had struck off the head of one Osmer, whose countenance resembled that of the English king; and, fixing it on his spear, he carried it through the ranks exclaiming aloud,—“Fly, ye men of Dorset and Devons: fly and save yourselves. Behold the head of your sovereign!” The Anglo-Saxons gazed in terror and dismay; for the king was not then visible, having plunged into the centre of the Danish host. The report of the infamous Edric was believed, and panic began to spread its withering blight through the whole army. At this juncture Edmund re-appeared, but his presence was now unavailing. In vain he threw off his helmet, and gaining an eminence, exposed his disarmed head to rally his flying troops. The fatal spirit had taken possession; its alarms could not be counteracted; and all the bravery and skill of Edmund could only sustain the combat till night interposed. The victory was yet undecided, but Canute had no inclination to renew the attempt. He left the contested field at midnight, and marched soon afterwards to London to his shipping.<sup>1</sup> It seems probable that had Canute trusted to strength instead of artifice, Edmund would have cleared the land of the troublesome Danes. But he employed intrigue, and the perfidious Edric was the instrument. Pleading his early connection and near relationship with the king—he had married Edmund’s sister—he solicited and obtained a reconciliation. It seems strange, and was peculiarly unfortunate, that Edmund should have placed any trust in so notorious a traitor. Yet he not only received him on his oath of fidelity, but allowed him to marshal his forces amongst the ranks of the English, and even gave him a considerable command in the army. Meantime Edmund followed Canute to London, and raised the siege of the city. A conflict soon followed between them at Brentford, in which both parties claimed a triumph. Baffled before the walls of London, Canute avenged himself on Mercia, whose towns, as usual, were committed to the flames; and he withdrew up the Medway. Edmund again engaged the spoilers at Otford in Kent, and drove them to Sheppey. A vigorous pursuit might have destroyed all Canute’s hopes; but the evil star of Edric again interposed. Eager to decide the fate of the harassed kingdom in one general engagement, Edmund assembled all the strength of England, and at Assandun, or Assington, in the north of Essex, the two armies met. Edmund arranged his troops into three divisions, and, riding round every rank, he roused them by his impressive exhortations to remember their own valour and their former victories. He entreated them

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax. 148, 149.—Flor. 385.—Knytlinga Saga, 130.

to protect the kingdom from foreign avarice, and to punish by a new defeat the enemies whom they had already conquered. Canute brought his forces gradually into the field, and, when the hostile array stood fronting each other, Edmund ordered a general and impetuous attack. His vigour and skill again promised a decisive victory, when Edric, the secret ally of Canute, deserted him in the very crisis of success, and fled from the field with the men of Radnor and all the battalions under his command. This treachery was the harbinger of total defeat. The charge of Canute on the weakened and exposed Anglo-Saxons was resistless. The valour of Edmund was forgotten. Flight and destruction overspread the plain. A few, jealous of their glory and anxious to give a rallying point to the rest, fought desperately amidst surrounding enemies, and were all cut off except one man. In this disastrous conflict nearly the whole of the ancient and valuable nobility of England perished.<sup>2</sup> The betrayed Edmund disdained yielding to despair. He had still resources, and attempted new efforts to deliver his oppressed and afflicted country. He retired to Gloucester, and such was his activity and eloquence that a fresh army was on foot before Canute overtook him. His martial spirit was unconquerable, and never did his magnanimity appear greater than on the present occasion. He could not endure that the best blood of his subjects should be so lavished for his personal advantage. Stepping forward, he challenged Canute to single combat, expressing his pity that so many lives should be put in jeopardy to satisfy their ambition. Malmesbury says, Canute declined the challenge; but Brompton, Huntingdon, Matthew of Westminster, and other writers, declare that he accepted the proposal. The isle of Olney was the appointed place of meeting, around which the two armies assembled. The kings received each other's spears upon their shields. Their swords were drawn, and the combat became close. Their dexterity was equal, their courage emulous, and, for a long time, the duel was obstinately maintained. At last the strength of Canute began to fail before the impetuous Edmund. "Bravest of youths"—he exclaimed, as he felt his powers giving way—"why should ever ambition covet each other's life? Let us be brothers, and divide the kingdom for which we contend." This proposal the respective armies hailed with gladness; and if the generous prudence of Edmund yielded, it must have been in compliance with the clamorous wishes of his subjects.<sup>3</sup> England was henceforth to be shared between the two monarchs, Canute being assigned the north, and Edmund the south. The princely competitors exchanged arms and garments, the money for the fleet was agreed upon and the armies separated. It is a suspicious fact, that Edric, always ready and alert to act against his natural sovereign, was at the head of the council, by whom the partition of the kingdom was negotiated. The brave Edmund did not long survive this pacification, he was assassinated within one month after at Oxford. The circumstances attending this barbarous deed are variously given, but there seems little doubt that Edric was the perpetrator. Malmesbury mentions that the villain seduced two of his chamberlains to wound him at a most private moment

<sup>2</sup> In this battle fell the ealdormen Alfric, Godwin, Ulfketel, and Ethelward.—Chron. Sax. 150.—Flor. 618.

<sup>3</sup> Westm. 205.—Hunt. 208.—Malmesbury, p. 72, and the *Encomium Emma*, p. 169, affirm that Canute declined this duel. The Saxon chronicle is silent respecting it.



with an iron hook, but he states this to be only a rumour. Other authorities speak with less reserve both as to the king's violent death, and its avowed author.<sup>4</sup> The northern accounts expressly state that Edric was corrupted by Canute to commit the murder, which took place in the night after the feast of St Andrew, in the year 1016. His premature fate was greatly lamented by his people, who now beheld their throne exclusively occupied by those foreigners who had so long been their oppressors.

## Canute.

SUCCEEDED TO THE THRONE OF ENGLAND, A. D. 1017.—DIED A. D. 1035.

CANUTE, from his warlike abilities, surnamed the Brave; from his renown and empire, the Great; from his liberality, the Rich; and from his devotion the Pious; obtained on Edmund's death the sovereignty of all England, at the early age of twenty. On the death of his father Sweyn, at Gainsborough, the Danish soldiers in England had appointed him their king. He was shortly after outlawed, but the fortune of war and the treachery of faction enabled him to triumph over his rival. The murder of Ironside sealed the conquest of the English; for if they had found it impossible, under him, to maintain their liberty and independence, it was not likely after his death they could resist the yoke of the Danes led by so able a general at the head of so powerful a force. Canute was chosen king without opposition, but his measures to secure the crown were sanguinary and tyrannical. His first policy was directed against the children of Ethelred and Edmund, who might become troublesome competitors. He was anxious, however, to cover his injustice with the appearance of law; and before seizing their part of the dominions, he summoned a general assembly of the states, in order to fix the succession of the kingdom. He here appealed to those who had been witnesses of the convention between him and Edmund, as to the terms of that agreement. They all loudly testified that Edmund had not intended in that compact to reserve any right of succession to his brothers; and as to his own children, that it was his wish that Canute should be their tutor or guardian during their infancy. This evidence was false, but it was extorted partly by force and partly for the purpose of conciliating the favour of the monarch. Canute went farther; he urged the assembly to take the oath of fealty to him, to which they consented, and immediately acknowledged him king. On his part he gave them his pledge of peace and protection. All old enmities were to be buried in oblivion. Full amnesty was granted for all that had been said or done. Ethelred's descendants were outlawed and for ever excluded from the throne. Still the pretensions of these native princes were sufficiently strong to excite the jealousy and apprehension of Canute; and here he was tempted to a repetition of those crimes which in all countries have stained the annals of despotism. One of the scalds or poets of his court has left it on record that he slew or banished all the sons of Ethelred.<sup>1</sup> The Saxon chronicler assures us that he deter-

<sup>4</sup> Ingul. 57.—Hist. Ram. 434.—Malm. 40.

<sup>1</sup> Knytlinga Saga, 140.

mined at first to exile Edwy, the brother of Edmund, but finding the English nobles submissive and complaisant, he ventured to gratify his ambition by taking the young prince's life. The nefarious Edric suggested to him a man, Ethelwold, a nobleman of high descent, as a fitting instrument to accomplish his criminal desires. The king incited him to the guilty deed. "Acquiesce," said he, "with my wishes, and you shall enjoy securely all the honour and dignity of your ancestors. Bring me his head, and you shall be dearer to me than a brother." Ethelwold affected to comply, but his seeming readiness was but an artifice to get the child into his own power and to preserve his life. Edwy however did not ultimately escape. Next year he was betrayed and put to death at the request and by the command of Canute.<sup>2</sup> Edwy, we are told, bore the singular title of king of the churls, or peasantry,<sup>3</sup>—a designation which could have no reference to a real dignity; and we can only conjecture that it was a name given him on account of his popularity with the lower classes,—a circumstance which would be the more likely to excite the jealousy of the Danish Sweyn. Edric persisted in his relentless hatred to the family of the late king, and advised Canute that the two sons of Ironside, Edmund and Edward, should also be sacrificed. A feeling of shame rather than of compunction, and a fear of rendering his government odious if he despatched them in England, prevented him from adopting this advice without some measure of precaution; he resolved to send them to his ally and vassal the king of Sweden, intimating his desire that as soon as they arrived at his court these objects of his suspicion should be put to death. The children's innocence moved the pity of the Scandinavian chief, who had too much humanity to be a deliberate murderer. But being afraid of incurring the displeasure of Canute by continuing to protect them, he sent them to Stephen king of Hungary,<sup>4</sup> by whom they were honourably treated and well-educated. The younger brother died; but Edward was married to Agatha, daughter of the emperor Henry II. and the fruits of this union were Edgar, Atheling, Christina, and Margaret; the latter of whom afterwards became the wife of Malcolm king of Scots; and, through her, the rights of the line of Cerdic were transmitted to Malcolm's progeny after the conquest of England. The removal of Edmund's children to so distant a country as Hungary, was, next to their death, regarded by Canute as the greatest security to his throne. But there remained two other claimants, equally young in years, but more formidable from the power of their maternal relations. These were Edward and Alfred, the sons of Ethelred by Emma, then residing in Normandy with their uncle, Duke Richard, who treated them with all brotherly affection. Richard even fitted out a large armament, in order to restore these English princes to the crown of their ancestors;<sup>5</sup> and though the navy was dispersed by a storm, Canute saw the danger to which he was exposed from the enmity of so warlike a people as the Normans. In order to acquire the friendship of the duke, he paid his addresses to his sister, Queen Emma, promising that the children whom he should

<sup>2</sup> Flor. Wigorn. 290, 391.

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. 151.

<sup>4</sup> Hoved. 436.—Flor. Wigorn. 619. Our chroniclers say Solomon king of Hungary: but Papebroche shows it must have been Stephen, not Solomon, who was not born till after the year 1051. Act. SS. Jan. II. 325

<sup>5</sup> Wallingf. 550.

have by that marriage, should be left his heirs and successors to the English throne. Richard acceded to the demand, and Emma was sent over to England, when she immediately bestowed her hand, without reluctance, on the murderer of her husband. The English, though they disapproved of this unnatural union, were pleased to find at court a princess to whom they were accustomed, and who had already formed connexions with them; and thus Canute, besides securing the alliance of Normandy, gradually acquired by the same means the confidence of his own subjects. Duke Richard did not long survive the marriage of Emma. He was succeeded by his eldest son, of the same name, who, dying within a year after him, without children, the duchy fell to his brother Robert, a man of valour and abilities, who sent an embassy to England to demand, in the name of his cousins, the young princes, the restoration of that kingdom. Emma was afterwards accused of incontinence, and, according to a well-known legend, she proved her innocence by walking unhurt over seven burning ploughshares; but it would be difficult to find a test by which she could be exonerated from the moral guilt of her union with Canute. The great point of his ambition was gained in obtaining possession of the English crown. But this was obtained at the expense of many sacrifices. To gratify the chiefs and nobles, he bestowed on them the most extensive power and jurisdictions. Reserving to himself only the immediate government of Wessex, he committed East Anglia to Thurkill, or Turketul, whose valour had greatly contributed to the subjection of England. Mercia he gave to Edric, and Northumbria to his friend Eric, the Norwegian prince. He made a public treaty of amity with his new subjects; but within a year the solemn compact was violated, for he slew three English noblemen without a fault, and divided their estates among his Danish friends. Many others were put to death on whose fidelity he could not rely, or whom he hated for their shameful disloyalty to their native prince, alleging that, once traitors, they ought never to be trusted. On the first opportunity, he expelled Thurkill and Eric from their governments, and banished them the kingdom. The treacherous Edric met with his deserts, and his punishment would have been an homage to virtue from any other person than Canute. He had used the profligate Saxon as a bloody accomplice in establishing his authority, and Edric imprudently boasted of his services, and murmured at the scantiness of his reward. "I first deserted Edmund to benefit you! For you I killed him!" Canute felt the reproach and coloured; for the anger of conscious guilt and irrepressible shame came upon him. "'Tis fit then," he replied, "you should die for your treason to God and me. You killed your own lord!—him, who by treaty and friendship was my brother. Your blood be upon your own head for murdering the Lord's anointed! Your own lips bear witness against you." The villain who perpetrated the fact was confounded by the hypocrite who countenanced it. The tone or the gesture of Canute indicated his intentions. Eric of Northumbria was present, and conformably, as it would seem, to a preconceived plan, he stepped forward and struck the wretch to the ground with his battle-axe. The body was thrown from the window into the Thames, before any tumult could be raised among his partisans; and the ghastly head spiked on the highest gate of London announced to the people that the felon had now paid



the penalty of his misdeeds.<sup>6</sup> The reward was suitable to his multiplied acts of perfidy and rebellion; and though the punishment of so base a traitor might wear the colouring of equity, the same excuse cannot be urged for the many other assassinations and forfeitures of the English nobility committed in the beginning of Canute's reign, and which have left a stigma of ferocity on the greatness of his character. These proceedings created considerable discontent among the English, who felt that they were really treated as a conquered people. The Danes, secure in the protection of their king, behaved with great insolence. According to popular traditions, if an Englishman and a Dane met on a bridge, the native was compelled to dismount from his horse, and make way for the victor. We learn from more authentic sources that the Danish possessors of the confiscated property were in constant danger from an irritated people, who saw their lands taken from them and given to strangers, new lords who tyrannized over them, increased their toil, and oppressed them with taxes. The oppressors themselves were in constant terror of revenge. They could not sleep in quietness. The halls which they had usurped, were garrisoned like fortresses in an enemy's country; and the law which imposed a fine on the township in which a Dane was slain, attests the general hatred and insecurity which prevailed. In addition to the forfeited estates Canute also found himself obliged to load the people with heavy taxation in order to reward his Danish followers. In the year 1018, he compelled the city of London to pay ten thousand five-hundred pounds; and at the same time he exacted seventy-two thousand from the rest of the kingdom. The misery which these forced contributions must have produced on the exhausted country, might be ascribed to necessity, or calculated to complete its subjugation; but such cruel exertions of power are a dreadful scourge to the mass of mankind, a terrible aggravation to the evils of poverty. Once fairly master of the kingdom, and freed from the danger of turbulent and rebellious chiefs, Canute seemed anxious that the English should be reconciled to the Danish yoke, by the justice and impartiality of his administration. He sent back the most part of his Danish troops, retaining only forty vessels in England; he restored the Saxon customs in a general assembly of the states; in the distribution of justice and rank he made no distinction between the two nations; and he took care by a strict execution of law to extend equal protection to their lives and properties. The taxes, however, continued throughout the whole of his reign to be levied with great rigour; if the proprietor could not pay his assessment by the end of the third day, the land itself was seized by the revenue-officers, and sold for the benefit of the king's exchequer. With all this it is surprising how soon the Danes gradually incorporated themselves with their new fellow-subjects. Both parties, weary of rapine and revolt, appeared glad to obtain a little respite from those multiplied calamities, the sad consequences of which the one no less than the other had experienced, in their fierce contests for power.

So tranquil was England in 1019, that Canute passed over to Denmark and spent the winter of that year in his native country. In 1025 his presence was again demanded in the Baltic, to defend his northern do-

<sup>6</sup> Malm. 73.—Mat. Westm. 402.

minions from the fleet and army of the king of Sweden, commanded by Ulfr, and Eglaf or Olave. He carried with him a large body of English troops, of which the famous Earl Godwin was intrusted with the command. In the first attempt he was unsuccessful; but the young Godwin had soon an opportunity of performing a signal service which gained him the friendship of his sovereign and laid the foundation of that immense fortune which he acquired to his family. He was stationed next the Swedish camp, and seizing a favourable moment, he attacked the enemy by surprise in the night, drove them from their trenches, threw them into disorder, and pursuing his advantage he obtained a decisive victory over them.<sup>1</sup> In the morning Canute, seeing the English camp entirely abandoned, imagined those disaffected troops must have deserted to the enemy. But he was agreeably surprised to find them at that very time engaged in pursuit of the discomfited Swedes. He was so pleased with this success and the manner of obtaining it, that he bestowed his daughter in marriage upon Godwin, and treated him ever afterwards with entire confidence and regard. Canute returned, but the Swedes, trusting to his absence, repeatedly rose against him, refused their tribute, and defied his power. In 1028 he made another voyage to Norway, the crown of which he now claimed as the right of his father's conquest. The detail of his wars in that remote region need not here be narrated. He expelled Olave, who had displeased the Norwegians by his innovations, and took possession of his kingdom. He descended, however, so far beneath the manly courage of a hero, as to corrupt the subjects of Olave from their fidelity by money.<sup>2</sup> He exacted for hostages the sons and dearest relations of the chiefs of Norway; and appointed Haco, the son of his friend Eric, to be his viceroy or governor. Haco perished off the coast of Caithness in a storm, and Olave was sacrificed in an insurrection of his countrymen, who took offence at the laws intended to accelerate their civilization. Ulfr, who was among the first enemies of Canute, obtained pardon and reconciliation, but he afterwards fell a victim to the royal displeasure. At a feast in Roschild they quarrelled at gaming; the indignant Ulfr prudently withdrew; and Canute taunted him with cowardice. "Was I a coward when I rescued you"—he had been the means of saving his life—"from the fangs of the Swedish dogs?" was the reply of the irritated earl. This reproach Canute could neither forget nor forgive. He sent his mandate, and soon after Ulfr was stabbed in a church which he had entered.<sup>3</sup>

Canute's next expedition was into Scotland, which he invaded in 1031. During the reign of Ethelred the tax of a shilling a hyde, called Danegelt, had been imposed on all the lands of England. It was imposed also on Cumberland which was then held by the Scots. But Malcolm, a warlike prince, refused payment, observing that as he was always able to repulse the Danes by his own power, he would neither submit to buy peace of his enemies, nor pay others for resisting them. Ethelred was too weak to compel Malcolm to submission; but Canute, who was not of a temper to bear refusal, appeared on the frontiers with a formidable army. Malcolm, unable to resist the united

<sup>1</sup> Adam Brem. ii. 38.—Chron. Sax. 153.    <sup>2</sup> Flor. Wigorn. 393.—Snorre, 278.

<sup>3</sup> Snorre, 276, 277.

strength of the English and Danes, agreed that his grandson and heir Duncan—the same celebrated by Shakspeare—whom he had made viceroy of Cumberland, should make the submission required, and that the heirs-apparent of Scotland should always acknowledge themselves vassals to England for that province.<sup>4</sup>

Canute was now in the zenith of his greatness, having the rare fame of ruling over six kingdoms. Emperor of the Anglo-Saxons was the title which he assumed; but he could boast that the English, the Britons or Welsh, the Scots, Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians, were subject to his kingly sceptre. Like all sovereigns who owe their elevation to force or the support of a party, he has been represented very differently by his friends and by his enemies. As a warrior he was certainly eminent; and as a foreigner accustomed to exercise despotic power, he governed in England, it must be admitted, with more justice and liberality than could have been anticipated from his origin and habits. Age softened his temper; while time diminished the necessity for having recourse to many harsh actions that stained the earlier years of his reign. Luckily for his fame a few incidents have been preserved concerning him, which rescue his character from the charge of indiscriminate barbarism, and claim for him the reputation of a lofty mind. He seems to have been one of those men who feel that they are born to merit the approbation of future generations, and whose actions become sublimer as their names seem likely to be perpetuated. Sensual minds which cannot rise above the level on which they creep, may neither believe nor covet an existence after death; but Canute seems to have lived for posterity as well as for his country. It was from some such sentiment as this, that, having in a moment of intemperance killed a soldier, and by that criminal deed violated a law which he had enforced on others, he felt himself called upon to act, not as an arbitrary king whom none dared to reproach, but as a man whose actions posterity would investigate. With a magnanimity, perhaps unexampled, he assembled his troops. They beheld him on his splendid throne arrayed in royalty; he descended from his state, arraigned himself for his crime, expressed his penitence, but demanded a punishment. He proclaimed impunity for their opinions to those whom he appointed his judges; and in the sight of all he cast himself humbly on the ground awaiting their sentence. A burst of tears at this generous humility bedewed every cheek. The jury respectfully withdrew to deliberate as he had required, and at last determined to let him appoint and inflict his own punishment. The king accepted the task; homicide was at that time punishable by a fine of forty talents; but he amerced himself in three hundred and sixty, adding nine talents of gold as a farther compensation.<sup>5</sup> Great conquerors have generally many flatterers; and the exploits of Canute, in an age of valour and enterprise, had equalled the most adventurous. Poets embodied in their melodies the admiration of his people, and recorded in strains of adulation those praises with which all Europe resounded. Encompassed with servile and interested sycophants, he may have felt the influence of vanity or presumption; but his mind was too strong to continue the dupe or the slave of self-conceit. He had seen many countries, and the

<sup>4</sup> Fordun. iv. 41.—Chron. Sax. 153.

<sup>5</sup> Saxo. Gram. 199.



more he gazed on nature, the more he felt the adorable Being who created and governs the universe. The expression of these sentiments in the rebuke he gave his nobles and courtiers is well known. In the plenitude of his glory these fulsome admirers of his grandeur ascribed to him powers and attributes which belong not to mortals. Canute ordered the throne or chair of state to be placed on the sea-beach, while the swelling tide was rolling at his feet. With an authoritative air of majesty he addressed himself to the waters :—" Ocean, the island on which I sit is mine ; and thou art a part of my dominion ! None of my subjects dare to resist my orders ; I therefore command thee that thou ascend not my coasts, nor presume to wet the borders of my robes !" The monarch feigned to sit some time in expectation of submission from his subject waves, for the master of so many kingdoms might be excusable in calling the sea his realm. But the mandate issued in vain ! He was not the lord whom the waters revered or obeyed ; they approached nearer and nearer until they covered his feet and legs with their heaving billows. Turning to his courtiers, he gave utterance to the following remark, at once expressive of their presumption and of his own insignificance :—" Let every dweller upon the earth confess that the power of kings is frivolous and vain ! HE only is the Great Supreme ! Let HIM only be honoured with the name of majesty, whose nod, whose everlasting laws the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all their host obey !" In token of his own subjection to the mighty power by whom the elements are ruled, he took off his crown ; and depositing it in the cathedral of Winchester, he never after adorned himself with that symbol of royalty.<sup>6</sup>

Among the kingly qualities in which Canute strove to excel, his liberality was distinguished. Master of the tributes of so many kingdoms, he possessed ample resources to gratify his munificence. His benevolence in general had these objects,—charity, literature, and public services. The clergy and the scalds were the only classes in that age who had any pretensions to learning, and both have extolled the liberality of Canute. The names of these poets, and some of their panegyrical effusions, have been preserved by the Northern historians. Thorarin was celebrated for the richness and facility of his muse. He gave a striking specimen of this faculty. He had made a short poem on Canute, and went to recite it in his presence. On approaching the throne he received a salute, and respectfully inquired if he might repeat what he had composed. The king was at table at the close of a repast ; but a crowd of petitioners were occupying their sovereign's ear by a statement of their grievances. The impatient poet may have thought them unusually loquacious ; he bore the recital of their wrongs with less patience than the king ; and at length presuming on his general favour with the great, he exclaimed, " Let me request again, sire, that you would listen to my song ; it will not consume much of your time, for it is very short !" Angry at the fretful petulance of the bard, Canute answered with a stern look, " Are you not ashamed to do what none but yourself has dared,—to write a *short* poem upon me ? Unless by to-morrow's dinner you produce above thirty stanzas on the same subject, your head shall be the penalty." The poet retired not

<sup>6</sup> Mat. Westm. 409.—Hunting. 364.

with alarm, for his genius disdained that ; but with mortification at the public rebuke. He invoked the guardian muses of the Scandinavian Helicon ; they showered their dreams upon him, and, before the allotted time, he stood before the king with the exacted poem, and received fifty marks of pure silver as his reward.<sup>7</sup> Canute was not only a liberal patron of scalds and gleemen, but was himself a reasonable proficient in that divine art. A ballad which he composed continued to be long afterwards a favourite amongst the common people of England. The subject was the psalmody of the monks of Ely, the sweet and solemn tones of which broke on his ear while he navigated the river Nen in the neighbourhood of the Minster. Except the first verse, all the other stanzas have been lost ; as a curious relic, we may regret that we possess no further specimens of these compositions which entitle Canute to rank as one of the royal authors of England. The following is the Saxon, almost *verbatim* :—

Merrily the monks in Ely sung  
As royal Canute sailed along :  
' Row on, my knights, row near the land,  
And listen awhile the choral song.'

Canute was a munificent benefactor to the church ; and the piety of his latter years presents a singular contrast to the occupation of his early life. Having by his conquests attained the utmost height of grandeur, and being at leisure from wars and intrigues, he began to feel the unsatisfactory nature of all earthly enjoyments, and to cast his reflections towards that future existence which it is so natural for the human mind, weary of the splendour and turmoils of this life, to make the object of its attention. Unfortunately the spirit which prevailed in that age gave a wrong direction to his devotion. Instead of making compensation to those whom he had injured by his former acts of violence, he employed himself entirely in those exercises of piety which the monks represented as the most meritorious. He built churches, endowed monasteries, and enriched the ecclesiastics. He bestowed revenues for the support of chantries at Assington and other places, where he appointed prayers to be said for the souls of those who had there fallen in battle against him. He even undertook a pilgrimage to Rome, where he resided some time, and obtained from his holiness several valuable immunities.

Of this journey—which took place in 1030 or 31—Canute has himself given a description in a public document, which he addressed to all the orders of the English nation. He says he went for the redemption of his sins, and the welfare of his subjects ; that he had projected this visit before, but had been hindered by business and other impediments. “ Be it known unto you,” he continues in his letter, “ that there was a great assemblage of nobles at the Easter solemnity, with the lord the pope John, and Conrad the emperor. There were all the princes of the people from Mount Gargano to the sea, who all received me with dignity, and honoured me with valuable presents. I was particularly honoured with various gifts and costly presents from the emperor, who gave me many gold and silver vessels, with very rich apparel.

<sup>7</sup> Knytlinga Saga, 146, 147.

I spoke with the emperor, the pope, and the princes, on the necessities of my English and Danish subjects, that a more equal law and better safeguard might be granted to them in their journeys to Rome; that they might not be hindered at so many fortified passages, nor oppressed by such unjust exactions. The emperor assented, and Rodolph, the king (of Burgundy), who rules most of the passes, and all the princes, consented that my subjects, whether merchants or travellers from piety, might go and return to Rome without detention or exaction. I also complained before the pope, and expressed myself highly displeased that such an immensity of money should be extorted from my archbishops when they came to Rome for the pall. It was declared that this should not happen again." After mentioning that these concessions were ratified by oath before four archbishops, twenty bishops, and an innumerable multitude of dukes and nobles, Canute exclaims, "Therefore I return my sincere thanks to Almighty God, that all things which I desired I have prosperously achieved, as I had contemplated; and have satisfied all my wishes!" The same epistle exhibits his character as a king in a very striking and pleasing light. In reviewing his past conduct with sentiments of regret, and publicly confessing that he intends an amendment, he displays a greatness of mind which kings of such successful ambition have seldom reached. Canute is a rare instance of a man improved by prosperity. His worst actions were in his days of difficulty and peril. When he had gained the summit of power and grandeur, his heart became humble, pious, and grateful. His early barbarism may be referred to tuition; his misdeeds to the necessities of state; but his latter feelings were the result of his improved intellect, and of a noble mind, enlarged by observation and experience. "Be it also known to all, that I have vowed to Almighty God to govern my life henceforward by rectitude; to rule my kingdoms and people with equity; and piously to observe equal judgment everywhere. And if, through the intemperance and negligence of my youth, I have done what was not just, I will endeavour hereafter, by God's help, entirely to amend it. Therefore I beseech and command all those to whom I have confided the government of my kingdom, that they in no shape suffer or consent to any injustice throughout my realm, either from fear of me, or from favour to any person of power. I command all the sheriffs and governors of all my realm, as they value my friendship, or their own safety, that they impose unjust violence on no man, whether rich or poor; but that the nobles and their inferiors, the wealthy and the needy, may enjoy their property justly. This enjoyment must not be infringed in any manner, neither in behalf of the king, nor any other man of power, nor on the pretext of collecting money for me; because there is no necessity that money should be obtained for me by unjust exactions." After alluding to some enemies whom he had pacified, and mentioning that he was returning to Denmark, whence, as soon in the summer as he could procure shipping, he proposed to visit England, he adds,—“I have sent this letter first that all my people should rejoice in my prosperity; because, as you yourselves know, I have never spared nor will spare myself, or my labour, when my object is the advantage of my subjects.”<sup>8</sup>

\* Spelm. Conc. 537.



Sentiments such as these from a royal pen are highly valuable. Such kings give new lustre to their thrones, and earn for themselves a fame more solid and durable than that which is built on the oppressions of victories and conquests. Canute's pilgrimage to Rome was signalized by the most profound charity. Everywhere, we are told, "he scattered gold and silver with unprecedented liberality." An anecdote has been recorded by an eye-witness illustrative of the humility and beneficence of the royal devotee. It occurred when on his journey at St Omer's. "Entering the monasteries"—says the astonished monk who relates the story—"where he was received with great honour, he walked humbly; he fixed his eyes on the ground with wonderful reverence, and pouring out, if I may say so, rivers of tears, he implored the aid of the saints. But when the moment came of presenting his gifts upon the altar, how often did he imprint the pavement with his kisses! How often did he strike his venerable breast! What sighs! What prayers that he might not be found unworthy the mercy of the Supreme Being! At length his attendants stretched forth his munificent oblation, which the king himself placed on the altar. But why do I say *the* altar? when I remember that I myself saw him go round every part of the monasteries; and pass no altar, however small, on which he did not leave a present, and which he did not salute. Then came the poor, and were all separately relieved. These, and other bounties of the lord Canute, I, your slave, O St Omer, St Bertin! myself beheld in your monasteries; for which do you pray that such a king may live in the heavenly habitations, as your servants the canons and monks are daily petitioning."<sup>9</sup> This appears to have been no ostentatious or theatrical exhibition; but the dictate of a genuine and sincere conviction. The incident affords a striking proof how powerfully superstition could sway the proudest minds, and what a hold it had obtained even over the haughty and turbulent passions of men.

The four last years of Canute's reign were spent in peace. He died at Shaftesbury in November 1035, and was buried at Winchester. His portrait has been drawn by the northern writers: He was large in stature, and very strong; of fair complexion, and distinguished for his beauty; his nose was thin, prominent, and aquiline; his hair profuse; and his eyes bright and fierce. By Queen Emma he had one son, Hardicanute. Sweyn and Harold were the fruit of his first marriage with Alfwine or Alfgiva, daughter to the earl of Hampshire; scandal, however, has assigned her only the place of a concubine; and affirms that she was not even the mother of her reputed sons. Sweyn, the eldest, was universally believed to be the son of a priest; and the youngest was thought to be of still lower origin, the son of a cobbler.<sup>10</sup> Whatever truth there may be in these reports, they affected not the success of the children.

<sup>9</sup> Encom. Emmæ, 173.

<sup>10</sup> Turner's Angl. Sax. Hist. vol. iii. p. 302.

## Harold R.

REIGNED FROM 1035 TO 1040.

HAROLD I. surnamed Harefoot from his agility, ascended the throne of England on the death of Canute. His succession was contrary to the treaty with Richard, duke of Normandy, which had stipulated that the children of Emma should be heirs to the crown of England. Whether Canute considered himself released from that engagement by the death of Richard, or thought it dangerous to leave his newly conquered kingdom in the hands of so young a prince as Hardicanute, he expressed in his will that Harold should succeed him. He had intended to partition his dominions among his three sons. Sweyn, the eldest, he placed in his life time, over Norway; but he lost that kingdom by the valour of Magnus, the son of St Olave, and soon followed his father to the grave. Hardicanute was nominated for Denmark, where he had taken up his residence; but he had a powerful faction in England from his connection with the line of their ancient kings. Accordingly, at the council which met at Oxford, to elect a new sovereign, the opinions of the voters were very much divided. The chiefs and population of Danish extraction espoused the interest of Harold, who, besides being on the spot to maintain his claim, had got immediate possession of his father's treasures, which might be equally useful whether he found it necessary to proceed by force or intrigue in establishing his authority. The suffrages of the English were strong in favour of Hardicanute, whom they esteemed as their countryman, the son of their queen. Earl Godwin, the most influential nobleman in the kingdom, and chief of the West Saxons, embraced the latter party. Matters were on the brink of a civil war, when, by the interposition of the nobility, a compromise was made, assigning to Harold, London, Mercia, Northumbria, and the provinces north of the Thames; while Wessex and the southern parts were conceded to Hardicanute, of which earl Godwin was allowed to maintain possession in name of his master. Until he should have returned from Denmark, his mother Emma fixed her residence at Winchester, and took upon her the cares of government as regent.<sup>1</sup> But, while that prince lingered abroad, his affairs in England assumed a very gloomy aspect. Godwin had been gained by the arts of Harold, who promised to espouse his daughter. This acquisition emboldened his followers, and Harold was proclaimed full king over all England. This election, however, was not sanctioned by the legislative authority; nor would the Anglo-Saxons recognise it as legal so long as the children of Emma were alive. Agelnoth, archbishop of Canterbury, refused to bestow the royal benediction. Instead of committing the crown and sceptre to Harold he placed them on the altar, and forbade his bishops to give their benediction. "I will neither give them to thee," said Agelnoth, "nor prevent thee from taking the ensigns of royalty; but I will not bless thee, nor shall any prelate hallow thee on the throne." Harold found threats, prayers, and bribes in vain. The consequence of this refusal was that Harold des-

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax. 154, 155.—Encom. Emm. 25.

pised both the bishops and their blessing, and lived as one who had abjured Christianity; for when others were attending divine service, he called out his hunting-dogs, or studied to occupy himself in some contemptuous pursuit. Another evil result was, a more deep-rooted hatred against the children of Emma, now the only barrier between him and universal dominion. With the assistance of Godwin, this impediment was removed; for while the treaty between them was yet a secret, the two tyrants laid a plan for the destruction of the English princes. Alfred and Edward still continued in Normandy; but the death of their cousin, duke Robert, left them without countenance or protection in that country. On the demise of Canute, Edward, by the assistance of his friends, had fitted out a fleet and sailed for England, but meeting with most decided opposition at Southampton, he abandoned his native shores and betook himself to his place of refuge. But the artifice of their enemies contrived, soon after, to draw them within the fatal snare. An affectionate letter in the name of Emma—but a forgery of Harold's—was addressed to them, urging one of them at least to hasten their departure for England to recover their paternal dominions. No event, in their destitute situation, could have been more welcome than paying a visit to their mother, who seemed to be living in a state of so much power and splendour at Westminster. Alfred, with a few trusty followers, whom he retained in Flanders, proceeded to London, where he was favourably received by the traitorous Godwin. Thence he was conducted to Guildford, unconscious of the deceit. His warlike retinue was artfully separated into little bands of ten, twelve, or twenty men, to be more conveniently entertained at different houses. A few only remained with the prince. Food and wine were profusely given to all till they sought the bed of rest. Their arms were secretly removed; in the morning they were laid in fetters, and about six hundred of them murdered, every tenth man only being spared. Alfred was taken prisoner, sentenced to have his eyes put out, and in that condition, hurried away to the isle of Ely, where death soon put a period to his sufferings.<sup>2</sup> Edward and Emma, apprised of the cruel fate that awaited them, fled beyond sea, the former into Normandy, the latter to Bruges in Flanders. The death or exile of these princes, and the absence of Hardicanute, enabled Harold to triumph in his bloody policy. He took possession without resistance of all his brother's dominions.<sup>3</sup> His short reign of four years is signalized by no other exploit except this memorable barbarity. In that single action the badness of his character may be discovered. He died on the 14th of April, 1040,<sup>4</sup> little regretted or esteemed by his subjects; and left the succession open to Hardicanute, who was invited by a deputation of the nobility, both English and Danes, to return and take possession of the vacant throne.

\* Encom. Emm. 29—31. Let it be recollected that this historian wrote within three years after the massacre. His testimony must overbalance the doubts of Malmesbury, who supposes the murder of Alfred to have been perpetrated after the death of Harold.

<sup>2</sup> Ingulf. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Florence says 1037, p. 400.



## Hardicanute.

REIGNED FROM 1040 TO 1041.

HARDICANUTE, the son of Canute, by Emma, succeeded, on the death of Harold, to the English crown. Though he was made king of Denmark, where he remained a considerable time, he had not abandoned his pretensions in England; and before Harold's death he had determined to recover by arms what he had lost either by his own negligence, or by the necessity of his affairs. On pretence of paying a visit to the queen dowager in Flanders, he had assembled a fleet of sixty sail, and was preparing to make a descent on England, when intelligence of his brother's decease induced him to sail immediately to London.<sup>1</sup> Here he was received in triumph, and acknowledged king without opposition. He did not, however, long retain his popularity; and the first act of his government gave his subjects a bad prognostic of his future conduct. Enraged at Harold for depriving him of his share of the kingdom, and for his cruel treatment of Alfred, he ordered his dead body, in the impotent heat of revenge, to be dug up and thrown into the Thames; and when it was found by some fishermen, and buried in London, he ordered it a second time to be disinterred and again thrown into the river. It was afterwards found by some boatmen, and buried privately in the Danish cemetery in London.<sup>2</sup> A more laudable vengeance was his resolution to punish Earl Godwin, who was universally believed to be an accomplice in the barbarity exercised on Alfred. That nobleman, equally servile and insolent, had submitted to co-operate with him in his unnatural and brutal treatment of Harold's body, hoping by this means to remove the odium that attached to him, and to persuade the world that he had no participation in Harold's counsels. This might have reconciled Hardicanute, had not Prince Edward, who was invited over from Normandy by the king, immediately on his appearance, preferred an accusation against Godwin for the murder of Alfred, and demanded justice for that crime. But the crafty Godwin knew the infirmity of his sovereign; he knew he had a passion common to all barbarians, that overcame his fraternal feelings. To appease the storm he presented him with a magnificent galley, richly gilt, and manned by eighty thanes, in sumptuous apparel and splendid armour. Each of them wore on his arm two golden bracelets, weighing sixteen ounces; a triple hauberk and a gilded helmet. A sword with a golden hilt was suspended by his side; over his shoulders hung a Danish battle-axe, damasked with silver; the shield was bound and embossed with gilded metal; and in his right hand he wielded a Moorish or Saracen assagay.<sup>3</sup> Hardicanute, charmed with this magnificent display, quickly forgot his brother's murder; Godwin's guilt was easily expiated; he asserted his innocence on oath, and was acquitted; the chiefs and nobles swore to the same effect; and, though it seems to be admitted that he had concurred in the murder, yet the forgiveness of his sovereign was publicly thought sufficient of all legal as well as of all moral responsibility. The affections of his subjects were

<sup>1</sup> Encom. Emm. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Flor. 623.—Chron. Mailros, 156.

<sup>3</sup> Malm. 43.—Flor. 623.

more and more alienated by the many renewed and heavy impositions of the Danegelt. One is noticed in particular amounting to £32,147. The nation was grievously offended at being obliged to pay for the fleet which brought him from Denmark. The taxes were collected by military force ; and so severely did the burden fall upon all ranks of the community, that the clergy were obliged to sell even their chalices and church-plate to discharge their assessment. Corn rose to an enormous price, probably from the difficulty of procuring money ; and the misery consequent on these oppressions occasioned a general discontent. The *Huscarles*, or domestic troops employed in collecting the revenues, were repulsed with violence in many places. At Worcester, the populace rose against them and killed two of these odious functionaries. Indignant at this opposition the king swore vengeance against the city, and ordered three noblemen,—Godwin, duke of Wessex, Siward, duke of Northumbria, and Leofric, duke of Mercia, to carry his threat into immediate execution, which they did by burning the greater part of the town. The place was delivered up to be pillaged by the soldiers, but they saved the lives of the inhabitants, whom they confined in a small island in the Severn called Bevery, till the king was appeased, and consented to pardon them. Fortunately this violent government was of short duration. The health of Hardicanute was frequently assailed by disease ; but he accelerated his death by an act of intemperance at a nuptial feast at Lambeth. His banner-bearer or marshal, Towid, a powerful Dane, had married Goda, the daughter of an English thane ; and the king graced the banquet with his presence. The carousal was prolonged deep into the night, and Hardicanute, while standing in the midst of the company, took off a copious draught of liquor, on which he fell senseless to the ground, and never spoke more.<sup>4</sup> He expired within a few days, in June 1042, and was buried with Canute at Winchester. His usual habits of intemperance were so well-known, that his sudden death, notwithstanding his robust constitution, which procured him the name of the Hardy, gave as little surprise as it did sorrow to his subjects. The only laudable trait in his character, so far as history has recorded it, was the brotherly affection with which he welcomed his half-brother, Prince Edward, in England. In caressing so formidable a rival, more popular than himself, he displayed a generosity rare in these turbulent ages ; and the more commendable, considering that he had been nurtured amidst wars and massacres, and that Denmark, where he received his education, was not the most productive soil for the amiable virtues.

## Edward the Confessor.

BORN A. D. 1001.—DIED 1066.

EDWARD, whose sanctity procured him from the monks the title of Confessor, mounted the throne on the decease of Hardicanute his half-brother. Though not the rightful heir according to the order of hereditary descent, yet his accession was favoured by several auspicious

<sup>4</sup> Dunelm. 179.

circumstances. Sweyn, king of Norway, the eldest son of Canute, was absent; and as the two last kings had died without issue, there was none of that race whom the Danes could support as successor to the throne. Edward was present to second the wishes of the nation, who loudly demanded a king of the house of Cerdic, and longed for an opportunity to recover their liberty from the Danish yoke. His character and misfortunes pleaded in his behalf; and though the descendants of Edmund Ironside were the true heirs of the Saxon line, yet their exile in so remote a country as Hungary appeared a sufficient reason for their exclusion to a people like the English so little accustomed to observe a regular order in determining the succession of their monarchs. Delays might be dangerous, and it was wise policy to seize the present occasion, while the Danes, left without a leader and not likely to act in concert, could offer no formidable opposition to the united voice of the natives. On the following Easter, Edward was crowned by Archbishop Edsy, who took the freedom of reading the new sovereign a long lecture on the royal duties, and the paternal government of his Saxon ancestors.<sup>1</sup> He was now about forty years of age, twenty seven of which he had spent in Normandy. Precluded by circumstances from every rational hope of obtaining the crown, he had solaced the hours of banishment with the pleasures of the chase and the exercises of religion; and he brought with him to the throne those habits of moderation and tranquillity which he had acquired in a private station. It was fortunate for Edward—for he appears to have wanted confidence in himself, and might have lost through timidity the chances in his favour—that he secured the friendship and alliance of Earl Godwin, whose power and abilities gave him great influence at all times, especially amidst those sudden emergencies which always attend a revolution of government, and which, according as they are seized or neglected, commonly prove decisive. The murder of Alfred, of which the latter had been publicly accused, had occasioned a declared animosity between them; but their mutual friends interposed, and representing the necessity of their good correspondence, obliged them to lay aside all jealousy and rancour, and concur in restoring the independence of their country. The crafty Godwin, ready on all occasions to sacrifice his politics to his interest, stipulated this treaty of amity for his own reward. He and his sons were to retain all their honours; the king was even to become a member of his family by marrying the earl's daughter, the fair Editha.<sup>2</sup> In this alliance the tender passion appears to have had very little concern, and seems to have been a mere expedient for accomplishing the elevation of the one and gratifying the ambition of the other.<sup>3</sup> From what we know of Edward's character, we can ascertain that he cared as little for the pride and pleasures of royalty, as he was averse to its toils; and in accepting the crown on the conditions required, he was only yielding to the

<sup>1</sup> It is published at the end of Lye's Dictionary.

<sup>2</sup> This 'fair rose'—as the chroniclers call her—was known personally to Ingulphus, who says: "I have very often seen her, when only a boy, on occasion of my visits to my father at the royal court. Often, as I came from school, she questioned me on letters and my verses; and easily passing from grammar to logic, she would catch me in the subtle nets of argument. I had always three or four pieces of money counted to me by her maiden, and was sent to the royal larder for refreshment." 62.

<sup>3</sup> The chroniclers say that Edward had bound himself by a vow of continence; and that Editha remained "*cetera vita virgo castissima.*" Ingulf. 62.—Ailr. Riev. 378.



wishes of one whom it would have been dangerous to provoke. Two other powerful earls, Leofric and Siward, joined their efforts to the common zeal for the royal service. William duke of Normandy, lent his influence to promote the same object, threatening the English with his displeasure if they refused to acknowledge the son of Emma; and by their aid the restoration of the crown to the Saxon line was peaceably effected. The Danish families whose fidelity was ambiguous, or whose former tyranny deserved punishment, were expelled the kingdom; and so rigorously was this proscription enforced, that the king's mother herself (Emma) was not exempted. In company with the three leading noblemen already mentioned, Edward hastened to Winchester, seized her treasures, and swept away the cattle and corn from the lands which she possessed as her dower. This violation of filial duty appears cruel and unmanly; nor have we any particular information why Emma was included in the list of political sufferers. The charge of disaffection, though it will not justify so harsh a step, is not altogether unfounded. By her partiality to the Danes, she had incurred the hatred of the natives. Her wealth and her attention were bestowed on her younger children, while her sons by Ethelred were subjected to the privations of poverty. She is alleged to have opposed the attempts of Edward to gain the crown on the death of Canute; and it is even whispered that she was not guiltless of the blood of Alfred. Her antipathy to the king had discovered itself since his accession, and she had obstinately refused to grant him any pecuniary aid. But whatever were the motives which prompted this act of severity towards her, the character of Edward, and the sanction of his council will authorise the belief that it had not been wantonly adopted. She was still permitted to retain her dower, and to reside at Winchester, where she died in 1052.

While Edward was employed in consolidating his power at home, a formidable competitor appeared in the person of Magnus the conqueror of Norway, who, on the death of Hardicanute, had also obtained the Danish sceptre. But this did not satisfy his ambition; he demanded also the English crown; and despatched sealed letters to Edward informing him that his agreement with Hardicanute was, that the survivor should inherit all the possessions of the other. To this message Edward returned a sensible and resolute answer: That he sat on the English throne as the descendant of the English monarchs; that he had been called to it by the free choice of the people; and that he would never abandon it but with his life.<sup>4</sup> This becoming firmness produced a threat from Magnus to support his pretension with all the power of Denmark and Norway. Edward prepared for war, and, to oppose the invaders, had collected a numerous fleet at Sandwich. But Magnus was detained at home to defend his Danish crown against the rival efforts of Sweyn the son of Ulfr and nephew of Canute. The appearance of this pretender taught Magnus the virtue of moderation, and he found it 'most convenient' to let Edward enjoy his kingdom in peace. Sweyn at the same time addressed himself to the English monarch requesting aid to get possession of Denmark; and Godwin recommended that fifty ships should be sent; but as Magnus was greatly skilled in maritime affairs it was thought advisable to decline the request. The son of Ulfr was ac-

<sup>4</sup> This correspondence is narrated by Snorre, *At. Magnesi Goda*, c. 38, 39.

cordingly defeated, and his cause appeared desperate when the unexpected death of Magnus raised him to the throne. Thus ended the perilous competition between England and the northern states. Sweyn's second application for assistance against Harold, who had succeeded to Norway, though again supported by Godwin, was negatived by the good sense of Leofric and the community. Edward, or his council, wisely suffered the spirit of hostility to die of itself. Even in his own dominions the mildness of his character soon reconciled the Danes to his administration: the animosity of faction and the distinction between the two nations gradually disappeared. In most of the provinces they were interspersed with the natives; they spoke nearly the same language, and differed little in their manners and laws. The joy of the English, however, on their present deliverance from a foreign sceptre, so strongly impressed their minds, that they instituted an annual festival for commemorating that great event, and it was observed in some parts of the country even to the time of Spelman. This relief, however, was but partial, for it was succeeded by another intervention of foreign influence, similar in kind though not in degree.

The king had been educated in Normandy, and had contracted many intimacies with the natives of that country, as well as an affection for their manners. The friends of his exile he invited over to England; his court was soon filled with Normans, who being distinguished both by the royal favour and a superior degree of refinement, soon rendered their language, customs, and laws fashionable in the kingdom. The study of the French, or Romance, as it was then called, became general among the people. The king himself was partial to that dialect, and this tended to diffuse its popularity. The courtiers affected to imitate that nation in their dress, equipage, and entertainments. Even the lawyers employed a foreign language in their deeds and papers. The adoption of these changes gave Edward an additional reason for retaining about his person the 'clerks' whom he had brought from France, and by whom all his writing business was transacted. They were his domestic chaplains, and the keepers of his conscience; and besides these influential functions, they were his legal advisers, and his secretaries of state; and as such they seem to have formed a bench in the Witenagemot. The chief of these was his arch-chaplain or chancellor; through them it was the custom to prefer all petitions and requests to the king; and there is no doubt they would find various means of serving their own friends, and disappointing the adverse party. The chaplains or clerks of the chancery were particularly obnoxious, many of them obtained the best places of honour and emolument in the king's gift. But above all, the church felt the influence and dominion of these strangers. Two of the royal chaplains were created bishops of Dorchester and London; Robert, a Norman, was promoted to the see of Canterbury, and always enjoyed the favour of his master, of which his abilities rendered him not unworthy. Though Edward conferred most of the civil and military employments on natives, yet the ecclesiastical preferments fell mostly to the share of the Normans; and as they possessed the royal confidence, they had secretly a strong sway in public affairs. This innovation might appear natural, as it might proceed from gratitude to the friends of his exile, and the companions of his youth; but it excited the jealousy of the English nobles, particularly of Earl

Godwin, to whose ambition it presented an unpardonable obstacle.<sup>6</sup> From murmuring, he proceeded to open rebellion; and immediately raised a military force from his own counties of Kent, Sussex, and Wessex. His sons had been advanced to honours and dignities, and the whole south of England, from Norfolk to Cornwall, was included in their respective earldoms. A family in these powerful circumstances could ill brook the usurpations of overweening foreigners. They treated the king with great insolence for encouraging strangers; and we are literally told by one who derived his information from their contemporaries, that they made him the butt of their ridicule. Edward was too placid to resent these affronts, but the Normans took offence and identified their own quarrels and injuries with those of their patron.

For a time the insurrection of Godwin and his followers was repressed by the overwhelming opposition of Leofric earl of Mercia, and Siward earl of Northumbria, two powerful barons who adhered to the party of the king and the Normans. It was not long, however, before their animosity broke out into action. Eustace, count of Bologne, who had married Edward's sister Goda, had repaired to England to visit the court of his brother-in-law. Passing through Dover, where they appear to have conducted themselves with great arrogance, one of his retainers being refused entrance to a lodging which had been assigned him, attempted to make his way by force, and in the struggle he wounded the master of the house. The alarm spread, and the inhabitants revenged this insult by the death of the stranger. The count and his train took arms, forced their way into the house, and murdered the wounded Englishman. A general tumult ensued; the streets of the town were scoured by the horsemen; nearly twenty persons were killed on each side; but the citizens defended themselves so stoutly that Eustace, overpowered with numbers, and having lost most of his train, was obliged to save himself by flight from the vengeance of the populace. He hastened instantly to Edward and complained of the usage he had met with. The king who had heard only one side of the dispute, entered reluctantly into the quarrel; and was highly displeased that a stranger of such distinction should, without any just cause, as he believed, have felt so sensibly the inhospitality and violence of his people. He gave orders to Godwin, in whose government Dover lay, to proceed forthwith and punish the town by military execution. Nothing could have been more disagreeable to that factious chief than such an order, had it even been justified by law. But at present he desired rather to encourage than repress popular discontent against those obnoxious foreigners; accordingly he refused obedience, and endeavoured to throw the whole blame of the riot on the count and his retinue. Perceiving a rupture to be unavoidable, he made preparations for his own defence or rather for an attack on Edward. His sons with their armies joined him in this rebellion, and demanded that Eustace and the Frenchmen should be delivered over to their vengeance. Under pretence of repressing some disorders on the Welsh frontier, they approached Gloucester where the king, without any military force, and without suspicion, happened to reside. Edward was greatly alarmed, for he knew the power of his adversary, and immediately applied to Leofric and Siward,

<sup>6</sup> Ingulf. 62.



praying for their assistance in this extremity. These noblemen, jealous of Godwin's greatness and well-affected to the crown, assembled the militia of their extensive earldoms, and marched without delay to the defence of the king's person and authority. Attended by a considerable army, Edward ventured to take the field, and marching to London, he summoned a great council to judge of the cause of this insurrection. The proposal was too reasonable not to be accepted; and at first the rebels pretended they were willing to stand their trial. But Godwin, who might have taken the king by surprise at Gloucester had he acted with vigour and expedition, found, on his coming to London, that the national assembly were by no means ready to become the instruments of his ambition, and that his own partisans had too much fallen off to measure strength with the king. The tide of fortune had now turned, and his adversaries were determined to push their advantages to the uttermost. Sentence of banishment was pronounced against Godwin and Harold, and within five days they were to depart forth of England. Their forces were dispersed and their estates confiscated. The father and three of his sons, Gurth, Sweyn, and Tosti, took shelter with Baldwin earl of Flanders, whose daughter was married to Tosti. The other two, Harold and Leofwin, fled with some difficulty to Ireland. His sister, the virgin-queen Editha, was confined to the monastery of Whirwell in Hampshire, where she was kept in cheerless captivity.<sup>6</sup> Thus a formidable insurrection was quelled without bloodshed, and the greatness of an ambitious family seemed now to be totally supplanted and overthrown. But Godwin was too firmly seated in his authority, and too well-supported by his foreign allies, not to make new efforts for his re-establishment. In a very short time, with a fleet of freebooters from all nations, he put to sea and attempted to make a descent at Sandwich; but the preparations of Edward obliged him to retire. In a second expedition he sailed to the Isle of Wight, where he was joined by Harold with a squadron from Ireland. He was soon master of the channel; and entering every harbour in the southern coast, he seized all the ships, and summoned those counties subject to his government to assist him in procuring justice to himself, his family, and his country, against the tyranny of foreigners. Great numbers joined his standard, and entering the Thames he appeared before London, where every thing was thrown into confusion and dismay. Edward seemed resolved to defend himself to the last extremity; but his soldiers, as before, were averse to civil war; and as Englishmen only were engaged on the other side, they scrupled to fight with their own kinsmen. The reluctance of the army, and the interposition of the nobles, made the king listen to terms of accommodation. The apparent moderation of the Godwins, who limited their petitions to the restoration of their former territories and dignities, and the feigned humility of the old earl, who disclaimed all intentions of offering violence to his sovereign, desiring only to justify himself by a fair and open trial, paved the way for a more easy admission. The result was highly favourable to the exiles. The great council stipulated that Godwin should give hostages for his good conduct; they declared that he and his sons were innocent of the crimes laid to their charge, and restored to them their earldoms. All

<sup>6</sup> Chron. Sax. 163.—Flor. 412.

the Normans were declared outlaws. The primate of Canterbury was deposed, and narrowly escaped with his life, so strongly were the people incensed against him. He contrived with the bishop of Dorchester to break out through the east gate of that city; and killing or wounding those who attempted to stop them, they betook themselves to the coast and put to sea. Others of the Normans took refuge in the castles of their countrymen; the queen was restored to her former rank; and this sudden revolution in their favour was enough to satisfy the ambition and appease the resentment of her family. By these concessions, the present danger of a civil war was obviated; but the authority of the crown was considerably impaired, or rather entirely annihilated. Sensible that he had not power sufficient to secure Godwin's hostages, the king sent them over to his kinsman the young duke of Normandy. The death of this nobleman, which happened soon after while sitting at table with Edward, rather increased than diminished the authority of his house. Harold, his eldest son, who was actuated by an ambition equal to that of the father, and was his superior in talent and in virtue, succeeded him in the government of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and Essex; and in the office of steward of the royal household, a place of great power. By his bounty and his affability he gained influence every day, and Edward, who had not sufficient vigour directly to oppose his progress, tried the hazardous expedient of raising a rival in the person of Algar son of Leofric, whom he invested with the government of East Anglia, which had belonged to Harold before his banishment. But this policy of balancing parties only created new broils. Algar was expelled by the intrigue of Harold; and the influence of the latter triumphed over every obstacle.<sup>7</sup> On the first insurrection of Godwin, Edward, by the advice of his French favourites, had solicited the assistance of William, who had recently succeeded his father Robert as duke of Normandy; but before that prince reached the coast of England with a powerful fleet, tranquillity had been restored. As his military services were no longer wanted, he landed with a gallant train of knights, and was kindly received by Edward, who conducted him with great honour through several of the cities and royal villas, and dismissed him with magnificent presents. Many—with what truth we can only conjecture—have alleged that the real object of this visit was the future invasion and conquest of England by William, and his succession to the crown. His family was certainly allied by marriage with that of Edward, and he was himself bound to that monarch by ties of friendship and gratitude. The Godwins were outlawed, and no competition seemed then likely to arise from that or any other quarter. Besides, Edward was living without a prospect of issue; and, except one royal youth in Hungary, the throne was left without an heir. The contemplation of these circumstances might excite the hope or the cupidity of William; but nothing is recorded of any plans or explanatory purposes which he might then have formed with a view to his elevation. The abbot Ingulfus, who accompanied him on his return to Normandy, and was for several years his confidential secretary, assures us that the idea of succeeding to the crown of England had not yet presented itself to his mind. But on the return of Godwin, and the banishment of the Nor-

<sup>7</sup> Flor. 416.—Chron. Sax. 169.

mans, affairs assumed a different aspect. Robert, archbishop of Canterbury, had, before his expulsion, persuaded Edward to think of adopting William as his successor: an advice which was equally recommended by the king's aversion to Godwin, his predilection for the French, and his affection for the duke. That prelate accordingly received a commission to inform William of the king's intentions in his favour, and this intimation was the light that first kindled his ambition. But Edward, irresolute and feeble in his purpose, perceiving that the English would more easily acquiesce in the restoration of the Saxon line, determined to invite his brother's descendants from Hungary, with a view of having them recognised heirs to the crown. In this resolution he was the more confirmed by the increasing power of Harold, and the prospect that the kingdom at his decease would fall a prey to confusion and anarchy. Aldred, bishop of Worcester, with an honourable embassy, was sent to demand the exiled son of Edmund, of the emperor Henry III. into whose family he had married, and the young Edward, the outlaw, arrived in London with his wife and three children, Edgar, Margaret and Christina. Greatly did the English rejoice on their return, for Ironside had been much beloved; but their gladness was soon converted into mourning. In a short time the prince sickened and died at London; and was interred in St Paul's Cathedral, amidst the sorrows and suspicions of the nation. In his death there is something mysterious. He had been studiously kept at a distance from the king, and as he was regarded by Harold a dangerous obstacle to the success of his future projects, there is strong ground to suspect poison, or some unfair agency. The premature demise of his nephew, and the unpromising qualities of young Edgar, caused Edward to resume his former intentions in favour of the duke of Normandy; though prudence taught him to postpone the execution, and even to keep his purpose secret from all his ministers. This choice, disastrous as it afterwards appeared to be from its consequences, was not devoid of political foresight. Edmund without doubt viewed the nomination of the Norman duke as the surest mode of averting the evils of foreign servitude or domestic war. The Danish kings, the pirates of the north, were arming to regain the dominions which their great Canute had ruled. At the very outset of his reign Magnus had claimed the English crown. A competition at home had diverted Magnus from this enterprise; but at another time the northern claim might be resumed; and in that event the wise and valiant William was more likely to resist a Danish invasion, than the inexperience of the infant Edgar.

Meanwhile Harold, who had his eye upon the crown, took every occasion of increasing his popularity, and preparing the way for his advancement on the first vacancy, which from the age and infirmities of the king appeared not far distant. Fortune about this time threw two incidents in his way, by which he was enabled to acquire general favour, and to augment the reputation he had already attained of virtue and abilities. He undertook an expedition against the Welsh, who had long been accustomed to infest the western frontiers, and after committing spoil on the low countries, used to retire hastily to their mountains where they set pursuit at defiance. With a squadron of ships, and a body of light armed troops to attack them in their fortresses, he soon reduced the marauders to such distress that, in order to avert their total destruction,



they made a sacrifice of their prince, Griffith, whose gory head was sent as a trophy to the Confessor.<sup>8</sup> The brothers of the murdered chief obtained his dominions, and became the vassals not only of Edward, but of Harold, to whom they did fealty and homage. The next achievement of Harold was his suppressing an insurrection in Northumberland headed by his own brother. By these services having gained the applause and the affections of the English, he openly aspired to the succession. Nor was his ambition long disappointed, for Edward, broken with age and infirmities, was attacked by a fever on the vigil of Christmas, five weeks after Harold's return from Northumberland. For three days he struggled against the violence of the disease, held his court as usual, and presided with affected cheerfulness at the royal banquets. On the festival of the Innocents, the day appointed for the dedication of the new church of Westminster, which had been the great object of his solicitude during his latter years, he was unable to leave his chamber. The ceremony was however performed greatly to the satisfaction of the pious monarch. Editha took charge of the decorations, and represented the royal founder. But his absence and the idea of his danger spread a deep gloom among the thousands who had assembled to witness the spectacle. After lingering a week longer Edward expired on the 5th January, 1066, in the sixty-fifth year of his age and twenty-fifth of his reign.<sup>9</sup> The following day he was buried with great pomp in the church which he had erected, then connected with the palace by walls and towers, the foundations of which still exist. There remains the shrine, once rich in gems and gold, raised to the memory of Edward by the fond devotion of his successors, despoiled indeed of all its ornaments, neglected and crumbling to ruin, but still surmounted by the massy iron-bound oaken coffin which contains the ashes of the last legitimate Anglo-Saxon king. In person Edward was tall and well-made. His hair and skin were remarkably white; his complexion rosy. In mind he was feeble, and incompetent to the task of vigorous government; but he had many amiable qualities, and unless acted upon by others, his disposition in general was well-meaning. To preserve peace and promote religion, to enforce the ancient laws and diminish the burdens of the people, were the chief objects of his administration. He was pious, kind, and compassionate, the father of the poor and the protector of the oppressed; more willing to give than to receive, and better pleased to pardon than to punish. His time was chiefly divided between prayers and hunting, the favourite amusement of his youth, and to which he was greatly attached. Of his attention to religion various examples are on record. Animated by the superstition of the times, he had bound himself by vow to visit the apostolic see in imitation of his predecessors Canute and Ethelwolf. But the design was opposed by his council on the ground that the king had no children, and that the danger of the journey might expose the nation to the evils of a disputed succession.<sup>10</sup> Pope Leo IX. authorised him to commute his intended pilgrimage for some other work of piety. With this view he set apart the tenth of his yearly revenue, and rebuilt from its founda-

<sup>8</sup> Flor. 424.—Ingulf. 68.—Gir. Camb. in Ang. Sac. II. 541.

<sup>9</sup> Chron. Sax. 171.—Spelm. Concil. 628—637.

<sup>10</sup> Spelm. Concil. 628.

tion, as has been noticed, the church of St Peter, or ancient abbey of Westminster, founded originally by Sebut, but which had been ruined during the Danish wars. His charities were frequent and extensive; and his efforts to relieve the public distress were truly laudable. The principal calamities of his reign, pestilence and famine, which then occasionally visited every part of Europe, made this beneficence the more necessary. As long as agriculture was in its infancy, every unfavourable season was followed by a year of scarcity; and while the intercourse between nations was rare and insecure, the wants of one country could not be supplied by the abundance of another. The writers of that age frequently complain of the distress caused by the failure of the crops, storms, earthquakes, and contagious distempers which afflicted not only the cattle, but also the human race. The benevolent heart of Edward mourned over the calamities of his subjects, and he eagerly adopted every expedient which seemed likely to remove or to mitigate their sufferings. On one occasion, when his nobles had raised a large sum from their vassals, and begged him to accept it as the free gift of his people, he refused the present as extorted from the labours of the poor, and commanded it to be restored to the original contributors. Another circumstance is recorded with pleasure by the annalists of the times,—his taking off the heavy and odious tax, called Dane-gelt, which had been levied with great rigour for eight and thirty years. Ingulfus ascribes the remission of this tax to the extreme dearth which raged in 1051, and in which so many thousands perished. He adds that the royal mind, according to some legendary rumours, was impressed the more deeply on the subject, because, one day when the collected tax had been deposited in the treasury, and the king brought to see the vast amount, the mass so affected his imagination that he fancied he saw a little devil jumping exultingly about it. However absurd, his mind was certainly weak enough to believe such a reverie; and many about him were interested to frame some device that might give it a foundation. He ordered the whole money to be restored to the people, and no more to be raised on such an assessment. An equally commendable feature of Edward's government was his attention to the administration of justice; and his compiling for that purpose a body of laws which he collected from those of his predecessors, Ethelbert, Ina, and Alfred. This compilation, though now lost—for the laws that pass under Edward's name were composed afterwards—was long the object of affection to the English nation; and so deeply were they impressed with the justice and mildness of his judgments, that the promise "to observe the laws of good king Edward" was inserted in the coronation-oath of all his successors, until the revolution, when parliament abrogated the ancient form. Edward's partialities, contracted in Normandy, have already been noticed, and the usages that were imported from that country into England. The Norman hand-writing was thought handsomer than the Anglo-Saxon; and besides the use of this, he established the mode of testifying the royal assent to special documents by adding an impression of his great seal, which was appended to the parchment in addition to the mark of the cross according to Anglo-Saxon custom. Hitherto the English kings never used a seal for the purpose of authenticating their charters. But the custom had been long common in France;

and, from the Frankish monarchs Edward borrowed the practice; though the seal itself—the original of which is preserved in the British Museum—exhibiting the royal effigy with an imperial crown, the sword in one hand and a wand surmounted by a dove in the other, and surrounded by the legend *Sigillum Edvardi Anglorum Basilei*, seems rather to have been copied from the patterns afforded by the Greek emperors.

His reign, though not altogether free from domestic commotions, was peaceable and fortunate compared with those of his predecessors. The Danes, employed in other adventures, attempted not those incursions which had been so troublesome and disastrous to former governments. The facility of his temper made him succumb or acquiesce under Godwin and Harold; and the abilities, as well as the power, of these noblemen enabled them, when intrusted with authority, to maintain the public tranquillity. The only foreign war in which Edward engaged was against Macbeth, the usurper of the Scottish crown, condemned by the immortal genius of Shakspeare to share for ever our sympathy and abhorrence. In 1039, that aspiring thane became the murderer of King Duncan.<sup>11</sup> A prince driven by violence from the throne of his fathers might justly claim the protection of Edward; and Malcolm, the son of Duncan, received from him permission to vindicate his rights with the aid of an English army. For fifteen years the power of the usurper discouraged every attempt; and the fugitive prince resided in Northumberland with his uncle Siward, sometimes called the Great from his great size, and whose sister Duncan had married. A favourable crisis occurred in 1054, when Macduff, the thane of Fife, unfurled the royal standard, and excited a formidable revolt in Scotland. Malcolm hastened to join the insurgents; and Siward accompanied him with a powerful force. Macbeth, abandoned by many of his followers, retired to the fortresses of the north; and, after a furious engagement at Lumphanan in Aberdeenshire,—Dec. 5th, 1056,—in which thousands of both armies perished, victory declared for Malcolm.<sup>12</sup> Macbeth fell; and the crown of Scotland was placed on the head of the rightful heir. Siward lost his son and his nephew, but he carried off much spoil, “such as no man ever got before!” With this exception, Edward’s warfare, in which, too, he was ultimately successful, was confined to appeasing the feuds of his nobles; and, if he did not altogether prevent the interruption, he at least secured a longer duration of internal peace than had been enjoyed in England for half a century. On the whole, Edward must be considered as a popular rather than a great or a powerful monarch. The goodness of his heart was adored by his subjects, who lamented his death with tears of undissembled grief, and bequeathed his memory as an object of veneration to their posterity. The blessings of his reign are the constant theme of the ancient chronicles. He could not boast of the victories he had won, nor of the conquests which he had achieved; but he exhibited the more interesting spectacle of a king sacrificing his private to his public interests,—and totally devoted to the welfare of his people. Under preceding kings force too often supplied the place of justice, and the country was impoverished by the rapacity of the sovereign. But Edward restored

<sup>11</sup> Mailros, 156.

<sup>12</sup> Hailes’s Annals, p. 3.



and enforced the dominion of the laws, and disdained the wealth which was wrung from the labours of his subjects. Temperate in his diet, unassuming in his manners, unostentatious in his person—though in public ceremonies he was adorned with sumptuous array—and pursuing no pleasures but those which his hawks and hounds afforded, he was content with the patrimonial demesne of the crown, and was able to assert—even after the abolition of the Dane-gelt, a fruitful source of revenue—that he possessed more riches than his predecessors enjoyed. To him the maxim that the king can do no wrong, was literally applied by the gratitude of the people, who, if they occasionally complained of the measures of the government, attributed the blame not to the monarch himself, of whose benevolence they entertained no doubt, but to the ministers who had abused his confidence, or imposed on his credulity. It must not be overlooked, however, that in estimating his character partiality has given a high colouring to the favourable side; and that, if he was fortunate, he owed his prosperity less to his own abilities than the contingencies of the times. His reign occupied the interval between the Danish and Norman conquests; he had no external enemy to encounter; while his provinces were in the hands of men of talent appointed by his predecessors. Historians were induced to conceal his faults and exaggerate his virtues, from the hatred they bore to the foreign dynasties which both preceded and followed him. He was a native prince, they were strangers; they held the crown by conquest, he by descent; they oppressed and insulted the slaves whom they had made, he became known to his countrymen only by his benefits. If he shone with superior brilliancy, his lustre was enhanced by contrast with the surrounding gloom; his fame was the gift of fortune rather than of merit; and his reign, though not splendid, was not degraded by conspicuous vices, nor stained by any remarkable disgrace. The surname of the Confessor, by which he is distinguished in history, was given to him from the bull of his canonization, issued by Pope Alexander III., about a century after his decease. He was the first English monarch that touched for the king's evil; the opinion of his sanctity procured among the people a belief in the efficacy of the cure, and his successors regarded it as a part of their state and grandeur to uphold the same opinion.<sup>13</sup>

## Harold II.

SUCCEEDED TO THE THRONE A. D. 1066.—DIED EOD. ANN.

HAROLD, the second of that name, was the eldest son of Earl Godwin, and Gyda or Githa, sister of Ulfr, brother-in-law to Canute. He shared during the reign of Edward in the quarrels and misfortunes of his father, was pronounced an outlaw, and sailed with his brother to Ireland, where they narrowly escaped with their lives, a severe tempest

<sup>13</sup> It continued down to the last century; the celebrated Dr Samuel Johnson informs us that he was, when a child, submitted to the virtuous contact of Queen Anne. The practice was dropped by the present royal family, who observed that it could no longer give amazement even to the populace, and was attended with ridicule in the eyes of all men of understanding.

having arisen in course of the voyage. The star of his family, however, was only eclipsed for a time. On the disgrace and expulsion of the Normans, they were restored to the royal favour. On his father's death, in 1053, he succeeded to his earldom and the government of the counties of Wessex, Sussex, Kent, and Essex. He possessed his father's ambition, but was superior to him in the arts of insinuation and address. By his modest and gentle demeanour, he had acquired the good-will of Edward, or at least softened the enmity which that prince had so long borne to his family. Instigated by a daring ambition, and gaining every day new partisans by his liberality and condescension, he took every opportunity of extending his authority, even by the dangerous expedient of insinuation. On succeeding to his father's territories, he vacated the earldom of East Anglia, which was bestowed on Algar, son of Leofric, who held that honour during Harold's outlawry. But Algar's rise to power was no pleasing omen to the son of Godwin, who was indignant that Edward should have raised a rival by conferring the earldom which he had resigned, for that of his father's, on a hostile family. Algar was, however, accused of treason to the king and the country, though, as most writers assert, unjustly and without any real cause; and soon after, by the intrigues of Harold, expelled his government, and outlawed by the judgment of the council. But he was too deeply injured to remain inactive. He fled to Ireland, collected eighteen piratical vessels, and returning to Wales, where Griffith, king of that country, who had espoused Alghitha his sister, was then waging war against Harold, they advanced with their combined forces to Hereford which they burnt. The city was pillaged, 400 of the inhabitants killed, and the cathedral and principal buildings destroyed. Penetrating into Gloucestershire, they were there encountered by Harold, and after much blood had been shed, peace was established, the sentence of outlawry reversed, and Algar restored to his possessions and dignity. The truce was of short duration. Harold, taking advantage of Leofric's death, expelled Algar anew, and banished him the kingdom. He was again restored by the assistance of his old friends and allies the Welsh, and a Danish or Norwegian fleet which made a descent on East Anglia plundering the country. But he scarcely enjoyed his triumph more than a year, and his death freed Harold from the pretensions of a dangerous competitor. This event exposed Griffith and his subjects to the just resentment of Harold, whose influence had now an undisputed preponderance; he resolved to punish them, and there was nothing to restrain the full exercise of his abilities. With a marauding fleet he circumnavigated the whole coast of Wales, while his brother Tostig marched over by land. Griffith fled; his palaces and ships were burnt, and the people amerced in tribute and hostages. The means by which Harold obtained such immediate and decisive success, are stated to have been a change in the accoutrements of his soldiers. In heavy armour, the Saxons were unable to pursue the Welsh into their mountains and recesses. Aware of this impediment, and of the difficulties arising from the nature of the country, and the fleetness of the enemy, Harold selected a numerous body of young men vigorous and active, ordered them to exchange their usual arms for others of less weight and dimensions; and gave them for defence helmets and targets of hardened leather. By this arrangement, wherever the Britons could retreat,

Harold could pursue. Leading his troops in the depth of winter, he crossed their snowy mountains, spreading on every hand the desolation of fire and sword. The indefatigable earl proceeded on foot, faring like the meanest of his soldiers, and traversing the country from side to side. Neither their forests nor their fastnesses could screen the inhabitants from his pursuit; and wherever they offered resistance he was victorious. To perpetuate the memory of his successes, he erected, on the site of each battle, a pyramid or heap of stones, with the inscription **HERE HAROLD CONQUERED.**

By the rapid progress of events, Harold was now become the most powerful subject in England. The advanced life and increasing infirmities of the king gave him the prospect of an early vacancy. The death of the young heir, in which he stands not altogether free of suspicion, left only one individual between him and the succession,—Edgar, a youth feeble in body and still more feeble in mind, whose hereditary right was sunk in his inaptitude to govern. Another competitor, however, then unknown to Harold, had appeared in the person of William the young duke of Normandy. It was evident that by descent neither could boast the remotest claim. William was the illegitimate son of Robert, and nephew of Queen Emma. Harold's connexions with the royal family arose from the marriage of his sister with Edward. Their title lay in their power and ambition; and in the latter William was equal, in the former superior to Harold. There was still one obstacle in Harold's way, which it was necessary to remove: Godwin, when restored to his power and fortune, had given hostages for his good behaviour, and among the rest one son and one grandson; these Edward, for the greater security, had consigned to the custody of William in Normandy. Harold was uneasy that such near relations, under his present circumstances, should be detained prisoners in a foreign country; and was afraid lest the duke should detain these pledges as a check on the ambition of any other pretender. By professions of obedience and devoted submission to the royal authority, he obtained the consent of Edward to release them, and with this view he proceeded with a numerous retinue on his journey to Normandy. Unfortunately the vessel in which they sailed was driven by tempests and stranded in the mouth of the river Mayo, on the territory of Guy, count of Ponthieu. A barbarous custom had invested the lord of the district with a pretended right, not only to the remains of the wreck, but also to the persons of the survivors; nor were torture and imprisonment spared to extort an exorbitant ransom for the captives. Harold and his companions were seized and conducted to Guy, by whom they were immured in his castle of Beauvain.<sup>1</sup> He found means to carry intelligence of his situation to William, and complained that while proceeding to his court in the execution of a royal commission from the English king, he had met with this harsh treatment from the mercenary disposition of the count of Ponthieu. No circumstance could have happened more propitious to the views of William. He was sensible of the importance of the prisoner, and foresaw that if he could once gain Harold, either by force or favour, his way to the throne of England would be open, and Edward would have no difficulty in accomplishing the favourable intention which he secretly

<sup>1</sup> Ingulf. 68.—Guil. Pictav. 191.—Chron. de Normandie.



entertained in his behalf. He despatched a messenger to Guy demanding the captive, and that nobleman not daring to refuse, surrendered Harold, who was immediately conducted to Rouen, the ducal capital. In the Norman court Harold was treated with respect and munificence; but he enjoyed only the semblance of liberty, and had soon cause to regret the dungeons of Beauvain. The duke, after showing himself disposed to comply with his desire in delivering up the hostages, took an opportunity of disclosing to him the great secret of his pretensions to the crown of England, and of the will which Edward intended to make in his favour. He desired the assistance of Harold in carrying that design into effect; in return for so great an obligation he made professions of the utmost gratitude; he promised that the present grandeur of Harold's family, so precarious under the jealousy and hatred of Edward, should receive new increase from a successor who would be so greatly beholden to him for his advancement. Harold, as may well be imagined, was surprised at this declaration; but being sensible that he should never recover his own liberty, much less that of his brother and nephew, if he refused the demand of William, feigned a compliance with his wishes. Compelled by the necessity of his situation, he renounced all hopes of the crown for himself, and professed his sincere intention of supporting the will of Edward in seconding his pretensions, and even did homage for his lands and honours to William as the future monarch of England. But the jealousy of the Norman required more than mere ceremonial profession. To bind closer to his interests, besides offering him his daughter Adela in marriage, he obliged him before an assembly of his barons, to take an oath that he would fulfil his promises in promoting his succession, and that he would admit a Norman garrison into the castle of Dover. To render this appeal to heaven more obligatory, he employed an artifice well-suited to the ignorance and superstition of the age. He secretly conveyed under the altar on which Harold agreed to swear, the reliques of some of the most revered martyrs; and when Harold had taken the oath, he showed him the canonized fragments, and admonished him to observe religiously an engagement that had been ratified by so tremendous a sanction.<sup>2</sup> The English earl was astonished, but dissembling his concern he renewed the same professions, and at length, loaded with presents, but distressed in mind, was dismissed from the court of his rival with all the marks of mutual confidence and esteem. He obtained, at the same time, the liberation of his nephew Haco, one of the hostages. Wolfnoth, however, was retained as a security for the faith of his brother. That Harold was captured by the count of Ponthieu, delivered up, and compelled to swear fealty to William, are indisputable facts; but the object which originally induced him to put to sea, is a subject of doubt and disagreement among writers; some alleging that he went to demand the hostages; others that he was employed by Edward to notify to the duke his intended elevation to the English throne; while a third class, who appear ignorant or incredulous of both these reports, describe his voyage as an occasional excursion along the coast, when he was cast by storm on the barbarous territory of Earl Guy. Whatever may have been the motive of this unfortunate journey, Harold no sooner found himself at liberty,

<sup>2</sup> Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscript. Tom. viii.

than his ambition suggested casuistry enough to exonerate him from an oath which had been extorted from him by fear, and which, if fulfilled, might be attended with the subjugation of his native country to a foreign power. He continued insidiously to practise every art of popularity, and by an ostentation of his power and influence, to deter the timorous Edward from consummating the destination of the throne in favour of William.

It was fortunate for the views of this aspiring prince, that immediately on his return to England, (1065,) his services were required to quell an insurrection of the Northumbrians. Tostig, his brother, had governed that province with the rapacity of a despot, and the cruelty of a barbarian. In this rebellion Morcar and Edwin had concurred—two brothers, the grandsons of Leofric, and who possessed great power in that district. Tostig had perfidiously murdered two noble thanes in his palace at York; at his request Editha had ordered the assassination of Gospatrick in Edward's court; while the recent imposition of an extraordinary tax, as it was universally felt, had armed the whole population against him. In the beginning of October the insurgents surprised York; Tostig fled,—his treasures and armoury were pillaged,—and his guards, to the number of two hundred, both Danes and English, were made prisoners, conducted out of the city, and massacred in cold blood on the north bank of the Ouse. Elated with their success, the Northumbrians chose Morcar for their future earl, and advancing as far as Northampton, they met Harold on his way to chastise and reduce them to subjection. Before the armies came to action, Morcar endeavoured to justify his own conduct and that of his adherents. Finding Harold disposed to listen to their grievances, he represented to him that Tostig had behaved in a manner so unworthy his station, that nobody, not even a brother, could support such tyranny without participating in some degree in the infamy attending it; that they had been accustomed to a legal administration, and were willing to submit to the king if they had a governor that would pay a regard to their rights and privileges; that they were freemen, and would not tamely submit to oppression; that they had been taught by their ancestors to prefer death to servitude, and had taken the field determined to perish rather than suffer the indignities to which they had been exposed; that they only required the confirmation of the laws of Canute, and the appointment of Morcar to the earldom; and they trusted that Harold, on reflection, would not defend in another that violent conduct which he had never admitted into his own government. This vigorous remonstrance was accompanied with such a detail of facts so well-supported, that Harold found it prudent to abandon his brother's cause, and returning to Edward, he persuaded him to pardon the Northumbrians, and to confirm Morcar in the government. He even married the sister of that nobleman, and by his interest procured Edwin, her younger brother, to be elected governor of Mercia. Tostig departed the kingdom in great indignation, and took refuge with Earl Baldwin, at Bruges, the usual asylum of his family. The nuptials of Harold with the sister of Morcar broke all measures with the duke of Normandy; and William clearly perceived that he could no longer rely on the oaths and promises which he had extorted from him. But the artful earl was now in such a situation that he deemed it no longer necessary to dissemble. His mode-

rate and generous conduct towards the Northumbrians had gained him the affections of his countrymen. He saw that almost all England was engaged in his interests; while he himself possessed the jurisdiction of the south, Morcar of the north, and Edwin of the east. He now made no secret of aspiring to the crown, and insisted that, as all admitted the imbecility of Edgar, the sole surviving heir, there was no one so capable of filling the throne as a nobleman of great influence, of mature experience, and approved talents, who, being a native of the kingdom, would effectually secure it against the dominion and tyranny of foreigners. The death of Edward, which happened at this crisis, left his real intentions, as to his successor, a matter of uncertainty. Two competitors, as we have seen, looked forward to the splendid prize with equal ardour. The love of justice and of legitimate right is so interwoven with the most common associations of the human mind, that even ambition, which seeks its object by a disregard for all law and equity, yet labours to conceal its vicious course, by pretending to tread in the path of rectitude. William and Harold were alike determined to possess the English crown at every hazard: but as neither could succeed without popular support, they addressed themselves to the conscience and feelings of the society in which they lived; and while they intended the sword to be the arbitrator of their dispute, each magnified his claims and talked of his right.

There is, perhaps, no great event in our annals in which truth is more difficult to be elicited, than in adjusting the succession between William and Harold.<sup>3</sup> The interest of both to persevere in their assertions, was so vastly important, that their different narratives have been believed and vehemently maintained by their respective partisans. Though it may be impossible to reconcile them in every particular, where the probabilities of the case are so equally balanced, it is but candid to hear what the parties have severally advanced. The friends of Harold assert, that before Edward expired, that earl and his kinsmen forced their way into the chamber of the dying monarch, and exhorted him to name a successor, by whom the realm might be ruled in peace and security. "Ye know full well, my lords," said Edward, "that I have bequeathed my kingdom to the duke of Normandy; and are there not those here whose oaths have been given to promote his succession?" Harold stepped nearer, and interrupting the king, asked him upon whom the crown should be bestowed. "Harold! take it, if such be thy wish; but the gift will be thy ruin. Against the duke and his baronage no power of thine can avail thee." Harold replied, that he did not fear the Norman, or any other enemy. Wearied with opportunity, the king turned himself upon his couch, and faintly intimated, that the English nation might name Harold, or whom they liked, as king, and shortly after breathed his last. It was upon this last will of Edward, that Harold founded his title; and many of our historians favour his claim. On the other hand, whatever the opposite party may have advanced, it does not seem likely that Edward, though his wishes might have been decidedly expressed, ever executed a will in favour of the Norman duke, much less that he got it ratified by the states of the kingdom, as is affirmed by some. Such a document

<sup>3</sup> Turner's *Angl. Sax. Hist.* iii. 339.



would have been known to all, and would have been produced by the Conqueror, to whom, had it existed, it gave so plausible and really so just a title. But the doubtful and ambiguous manner in which he seems always to have mentioned it, evinces that he could only plead the known intentions of that monarch in his favour, which he was desirous to call a will. In one of his charters he calls himself *rex hereditarius*, intimating his right as heir; but he had then obtained the crown, and might employ, without being challenged, what term he chose. In the war of argument, William had one great triumph. Harold had sworn to assist his rival in ascending the throne of England; and when the son of Godwin took the sceptre to himself, he violated his solemn adjuration as a Christian, as well as his plighted honour as a soldier, and a man. This charge of perjury Harold endeavoured to repel, by pleading that his oaths had been extorted by force and constraint; but such an excuse amounts to little else than an evasion, and can prove nothing but his own insincerity. It is also inauspicious to his cause, that his journey to the continent, when he was thrown by a tempest on the coast of Ponthieu, should be explained so contradictorily by his own abettors.<sup>4</sup> The various statements respecting the conflicting claims of William and Harold, it may be difficult to reconcile, but they are just such as are often to be met with in the affairs of private life; and whatever uncertainty there may be as to the contradictory bequests of the Confessor, one fact is obvious, that the pretensions of both competitors were founded upon acts emanating from a wavering and feeble mind. When such disputes take place in the transactions of ordinary life, they are decided by a court of justice; if they concern a kingdom, they can only be settled by the sword. Hesitation or delay might have proved fatal to Harold's cause; but he so well prepared matters, that immediately on Edward's death he stepped into the vacant throne. On the same evening, he was proclaimed king in an assembly by the nobles and the citizens of London; and the next day witnessed both the funeral of the late, and the coronation of the new, sovereign. The accession was attended with as little disturbance or opposition, as if he had succeeded by the most undoubted hereditary title, for the claim of Edgar Atheling, the last surviving male of the race of Cerdic, was never mentioned, much less that of the Norman

<sup>4</sup> There is one important relic of those times, discovered about a century ago, which has survived, and which is peculiarly interesting, because it illustrates and confirms the history of this period, more especially the transaction between Harold and William. In the cathedral church of Bayeux, in Normandy, an ancient tapestry has been preserved, which contradicts the story of Harold being driven by storm on the opposite shore, while on a mere excursion of pleasure. The ground of this piece of work is a white linen cloth or canvass, one foot eleven inches in depth, and two hundred and twelve feet in length. The figures of the men, horses, &c., are rudely shaped, but in their proper colours, wrought in the manner of samplers in worsted. It has been very generally ascribed to Queen Matilda, wife of the Conqueror, and the maids of her court; and we have good authority that the English ladies of that age excelled at their needle, and in gold embroidery. The whole journey is minutely depicted. Edward directing Harold to repair to Normandy; the embarkation of the earl, with his train of cavaliers, dogs, and hawks; his landing and captivity in Beauvain; his interview with William in the ducal palace at Rouen; his stay and military exploits in that country; his swearing homage, over the holy relics, to William, who appears on his throne without armour, but with a sword, and his left hand extended; his return to England; and lastly, his coronation. This tapestry obviously confirms the main circumstance of the Norman account; though, as an historical document, it cannot be regarded as completely free from suspicion.

duke. It is true he had assumed the crown without waiting for the free deliberation of the states, or regularly submitting the question to their determination; but he might take the general silence for consent, and appeal to the suffrages of the people, which appeared unanimous. The whole nation seemed joyfully to acquiesce in his elevation; if any were averse to this measure, they were obliged to conceal their sentiments. Aldred, archbishop of York, performed the ceremony of the coronation, on account of the suspension of Stigant from the see of Canterbury; though the Normans represent the latter prelate as officiating on that occasion.<sup>5</sup> The only discontented portion of his subjects were the Northumbrians, who were preparing to find a chieftain of their own. But Harold hastened with an army to the north, and by his conciliatory conduct, and his marriage with Alghitha, the daughter of Algar, he secured the obedience of that province, and bound the two powerful earls, Morcar and Edwin, to his interests.<sup>6</sup>

The intelligence of Edward's demise and Harold's usurpation, had been conveyed to Normandy by the same messenger. William was hunting in the park of Rouen, surrounded by a noble train of knights, squires, and damsels, when the envoy arrived. The bow dropped out of his hand, such was the effect of his surprise and anxiety; he clasped and unclasped his mantle, spoke not a word, and looked so fierce, that no one ventured to address him. Entering a small boat, he crossed the Seine—still silent,—strode into the great hall of his palace,—threw himself into a seat, wrapped his head in his cloak, and bent his body downwards, apparently overwhelmed with the sensation of the tidings. The streets of Rouen were crowded with inquirers. "Sirs," said the seneschal to the eager multitude, "ye shall soon know the cause of our lord's anxiety;" and then approaching his master, he roused him from his painful reverie. Moved to the highest pitch of indignation, William assembled his council, informed them of the event, and expressed his resolution to pursue, by arms, his pretensions to the crown of England.<sup>7</sup> An embassy was despatched to remind Harold of his former oath of fealty and promise of assistance. The latter replied, that the oath with which he was reproached was not obligatory, being the result of force; that he had no authority either from the late king, or the states of England, to tender him the succession; that he had himself been elected by the free choice of the people, and would prove himself unworthy of their favour if he did not strenuously maintain their liberties; and that if any attempts were made on the throne by violence, the 'Bastard of Normandy' should experience the power of a united nation, conducted by a prince resolved to lose his government only with his life. The message was exactly such as William expected. It was an unnecessary parade of form, as both parties had determined to appeal to arms; and the English, no less than the Normans, were astonished at the mighty preparations making to decide the splendid prize.<sup>8</sup> Harold did not feel his own weakness, and he scarcely knew the resources of his adversary; but it was unfortunate that he had to contend at the same time not only with William, but with his own brother, Tostig, then in Flanders, who stirred up every opposition in his power.

<sup>5</sup> Turner's *Angl. Sax. Hist.* iii. 353.—Lingard, i. 323.

<sup>6</sup> *Ang. Sac.* ii. 253.

<sup>7</sup> *Chronique de Normandie.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ingulf.* 68.—*Malm.* 56.

He visited Normandy, and arranged a plan of co-operation with the duke, and sent messengers to Norway, in the hope of exciting the freebooters of that kingdom. Having collected a fleet of sixty sail at Bruges, he entered the channel and began the war by levying contributions in the Isle of Wight. But he retired on the approach of his brother, towards the north; and in Lindesay he was defeated by Edwin, earl of Mercia. His mariners abandoned him in distress, and Malcolm king of Scotland, offered him an asylum till the arrival of his northern ally. The Norwegian monarch, Hardrada, embarked with his family and a gallant army, in a fleet of three hundred sail. The queen and her two daughters, fearing the danger of the campaign, were set on shore at Orkney. The combined fleets met at the mouth of the Tyne. Their first object was to obtain possession of York; and with this view they entered the Humber, and ascended the Ouse. The two brothers, Edwin and Morcar, made a desperate effort to save that capital. The impetuosity of the English burst through the enemy's line, which was drawn up with their right flank to the river, and their left to a morass; but they in their turn were repulsed by a fresh body of troops from the ships; and more of the fugitives perished in the water than had fallen by the sword. So great was the carnage, that the Norwegians traversed the marsh on the bodies of the slain. The two earls escaped to York, and the mutual exchange of one hundred and fifty hostages shows that the province was conditionally surrendered to the invaders.<sup>9</sup> The citizens of York either believing opposition to be hopeless, or not choosing to resist, opened their gates to the victor, who proceeded to establish his authority by summoning all the inhabitants to perform homage, according to the forms of the constitution. The news of this disaster arrived as he was completing his preparations to meet the threatened descent of the Normans. Rallying his forces, he lost not a moment in marching against the aggressors, and in four days after the surrender of York he reached the seat of war. The rebels were surprised, but not dismayed. Hardrada, arrayed in a blue mantle and glittering helmet, retired to Stamford bridge, on the Derwent, waiting reinforcements from his ships. There he drew up his warriors in a compact but hollow circle. The royal standard, called the *Land-eyda*, or 'the ravager of the earth,' occupied the centre. The circumference was composed of spearmen, ranged with target close to target, forming what they termed a *Skield-bong*, or 'fortress of shields.' The whole was surrounded by a line of spears firmly fixed in the earth, and bristling outwards in an oblique direction. The English cavalry were accustomed to charge in irregular masses, and if they met with resistance, to disperse themselves and re-assemble on a given point; but the fine array of the Norwegians bade defiance to all their attempts, and Harold, with his great superiority of force, might yet have been foiled, had not the enemy, believing their adversaries were about to fly, broken their ranks and begun the pursuit. At this instant the English wheeled round and rushed in through the opening. In the confusion Hardrada was shot in the neck with an arrow; he fell instantly, and Tostig assumed the command. Peace was offered, but he declined all terms; and the Norwegians with one voice declared they would accept of no quarter. The combat was

<sup>9</sup> Chron. Sax. 172.—Higd. 284.



renewed with desperate but unavailing ferocity, and continued obstinately to rage long after every reasonable hope of success had been extinguished. Late in the evening the battle terminated with the death of Tostig, and of every celebrated chieftain in the Norwegian army. This action, fought on the 25th September 1066, is considered as one of the bloodiest recorded in our annals, and at the distance of fifty years, the spot was still whitened with the bones of the slain.<sup>10</sup>

Two of Harold's competitors had now fallen, and if an interval had elapsed before the assault of the third, sufficient to have recruited and organized a new force, it is not improbable that the duke of Normandy would have experienced the fate of the king of Norway. But three days only intervened between the defeat of the former and the invasion of the latter,—a space necessarily employed by Harold, in taking possession of the Norwegian fleet, and refreshing his weary troops. Early in the spring William had consulted with his chiefs on his meditated attack on England. Preparations were vigorously made, soldiers assembled, and a great number of ships constructed. His intentions were known over the whole continent, and the courageous adventurer from every coast was invited to share the honour, the danger, and the wealth, of this expedition. Crowds of warriors, and stores of supplies, came from all parts of the country. The courts of Brittany, Anjou, and Flanders, zealously seconded the duke's cause, and encouraged their subjects to join his standard. The emperor Henry IV. not only gave his vassals permission to embark, but guaranteed the safety of Normandy during the absence of the prince. Even the court of France, though it might justly fear the aggrandisement of so dangerous a rival, made not that resistance which its own interests so obviously dictated. But the most important ally of the whole was the pope, Alexander III., who had a mighty influence over the minds of the ancient barons, and who hoped, if the Norman arms were successful, they might impart into that county a more devoted reverence to the Romish see, and bring the English churches to a nearer conformity with those of the continent. His holiness accordingly pronounced Harold a perjured usurper, denounced excommunication against him and his adherents, and to strengthen the faith and the courage of the soldiers, he sent the duke, as a visible token of protection, a consecrated banner,—the *genfanon* of St Peter,—and a precious ring with one of that venerated apostle's hairs in it. Thus was the ambition which instigated this invasion, and all the violence that accompanied it, covered over safely with the broad mantle of religion. The papal sanction was in itself an attack upon the secular authority; but in the dark ages it was a sufficient guarantee for any pretext, however futile or tyrannical. The greatest obstacle which William had to encounter was among his own subjects. He could not command them to cross the sea, as their tenures did not compel them to such a service. The barons at first were divided in their opinions, and in the council assembled at Lislebonne, such was the storm of opposition and the outcry of disapprobation, that it seemed as if the very roof of the hall would be rent asunder. They were reluctant either to grant the exorbitant sums necessary for the outfit, or to set the example of serving at a distance from their own territories. William, who

<sup>10</sup> Snorre 156—165.—Chron. Sax. 172.—Ord. Vital. 500.

could not restore order, withdrew into another apartment, and calling the chiefs to him one by one, he argued and reasoned with them, declaring that their present expedition should form no precedent in future, and that the fertile lands of England should reward their fidelity. The prospect of remuneration assuaged the political tempest; the barons assented, and swore to assist their prince to their utmost with men and money; and that they might not retract, a clerk wrote down in his roll, the number of knights and vessels which each could furnish to this enterprise. The Norman states now vied with each other in supplying men, horses, arms, and provisions. Every vessel was put in requisition, and many private individuals sought the favour of their sovereign by building in the different creeks and harbours, ships at their own expense. The whole armament—the greatest that had ever been seen—was completed in August; and the general rendezvous was appointed at the mouth of the Dive, a small river between Havre and Caen. The number of vessels has been variously estimated from seven hundred to three thousand, the latter computation most probably included all the smaller craft. William's own vessel, a present from his wife Matilda, was distinguished above the rest, at night by the cresset which flamed on the topmast, and in the day, by its resplendent ornaments and decorations. The camp, filled with a select army of sixty thousand men, bore a gay yet martial appearance, from the discipline of the troops, the vigour and beauty of the horses, the lustre of the arms, and the rich accoutrements of both, but above all, from the high and noble names that ranked under the banners of Normandy, eager to reap the prize of their valour, and raise their trophies on the opposite shore. The gathering of the fleet had been delayed by contrary gales and other mischances. For a month it lay in the shallow estuary of the Dive; nor was it released from this tedious confinement until the approach of the equinox brought a change of weather. William eagerly seized the opportunity of putting to sea, and sailed round Havre, to St Vallery near Dieppe. Here the wind became gradually more violent, and the skill of the mariners was baffled by the turbulence of the elements, and the fear of the troops. Several of the vessels were dashed in pieces, and the whole coast was strewn with fragments of wreck and the bodies of the drowned. This disaster was a severe check on the impatience of William, and induced many to abandon the enterprise. He caused the dead bodies to be buried with speed and privacy, and to exhilarate the drooping spirits of his soldiers, he distributed abundance of provisions, and made a successful appeal to their superstition. To interest Heaven in their behalf, and with the hope of obtaining a prosperous navigation, the body of St Vallery was carried in procession, the whole army joining in their devout supplications for a favourable breeze. At last their wishes were gratified; the current of the atmosphere, from whatever cause, altered the same evening—the eve of St Michael, the patron of Normandy—in the direction they desired. The expedition embarked, the duke himself leading the van; the rest being enjoined to take their direction during the night from the lighted beacon on his mast-head, to prevent disasters usual to an unknown coast. So unequal was their speed, or so ardent their leader, that, on reaching the English shore, the fleet was scattered over a line of twenty leagues. At first not a single vessel was in sight, and when a mariner was ordered to the top-mast, he beheld

nothing but the clouds and the ocean. William cast anchor, and took a cheerful refreshment. A second sailor mounted and saw four ships appearing in the horizon; and the heart of the warlike duke swelled with joy, when a third seaman, after a short interval, announced the waving streamers of a sailing forest. Without any material loss, the invaders reached Pevensey in Sussex, where they quietly debarked.<sup>11</sup> Boat after boat pushing through the surf, and glistening with shields and spears, poured out the motley natives of the Norman host. In some stood the war-horses neighing and pawing at the prospect of release from their irksome confinement. In others were the archers, closely shorn, arrayed in a light succinct garb, each with a long bow in his hand, and a quiver by his side, filled with those cloth-yard shafts which, in process of time, became the favourite and national weapons of the English yeomanry. Next followed the heavy armed troops, the knights with habergeon of mail, laced helmet, each having his shield descending from his neck, and his sword borne by an attending squire. Lastly came the pioneers with their sharp axes, well-trained, and prepared to labour for the defence of the army they had accompanied. The beach was covered with multitudes of warriors clad in gleaming steel, and in apparent disorder, but, in a moment, each mounted his steed, formed into squadrons, and advanced in triumph on the land which they already claimed as their possession.

The quick eye of William soon discovered the proper spot for his entrenchments; fortifications were thrown up both at Pevensey and Hastings to protect the transports and secure a retreat in case of disaster. Some circumstances connected with this armada are illustrative of the superstition of the times. In compliance with the opinion of his age, William carried an astrologer in his train to note the lucky conjuncture of the planets. By dint of sortilege he had ascertained that the duke would succeed, and that Harold would surrender without a battle; assurances on which the Normans confidently relied. From the disasters at sea they had begun to imagine that heaven had declared against them, notwithstanding St Peter's hair and the pope's benediction,—for these bold warriors who despised real dangers, were very subject to the dread of imaginary ones. But the relics of St Vallery, and the predictions of the necromancer, had the effect of entirely dispelling their gloomy forebodings. After the landing William inquired for his conjuror; a pilot came forward and informed him that the learned clerk had been drowned in the passage,—a catastrophe from which the prince descended to his hearers on the folly of trusting to the predictions of one who undertook to tell the fortunes of others when he was unable to foresee what should happen to himself. It is recorded of William that as he leaped on shore he happened to stumble, and fell on the palms of his hands; an accident which his followers interpreted into an omen of misfortune. But he had presence of mind enough to turn the accident to his advantage; raising himself from the ground, and with the earth adhering to his hands, "See!"—he exclaimed—"I have taken possession of the country!" This lucky expression re-animated their courage, so excitable is

<sup>11</sup> Guil. Pict. 199.—*Chronique de Normandie*, 128.



the mind of ignorance ; at the same time a soldier, running to a neighbouring village, plucked some thatch which, as giving him seizin of the kingdom, he presented to his general.<sup>12</sup>

The landing of this formidable armament was not unobserved by the English. The peasantry who dwelt on the coast, and who had congregated on the cliffs, gazed with the utmost alarm at the hostile array, which, as they well-knew, was destined for the conquest of their country. The alarm spread ; increased by the appearance of the comet which this year blazed in the sky, seeming to forebode the revolution and bloodshed that ensued. One of the thanes, left in charge of the southern counties, surveyed from a rising ground the operations of the enemy ; and no sooner had they debarked and erected their stockades, than he hastened to the north to communicate the intelligence to his sovereign. The tidings reached Harold as he sat at a banquet in the city of York, while celebrating with festal triumph his victory over the Norwegians, exactly four days after that event. Unfortunately for Harold, the delay in the sailing of the French fleet occasioned an unhappy error, which may be said to have proved his ruin. Expecting the invasion of the Normans in the spring, he had kept his fleet—which some exaggerate to seven hundred sail—stationed off the isle of Wight, and his army encamped in the vicinity. This guard was continued during the summer and autumn ; and so long as it watched the coast, the throne of Harold was secure. But, on the 8th of September, the want of provisions obliged them to disperse ; and the king, being immediately after occupied by the Norwegian invasion, neglected to supply and refit his scattered navy. Thus was the main obstacle to William's expedition removed, and England deprived of its great national bulwark. Had the Normans left the Dive a month earlier, as they expected, they would have experienced a very different reception from the fleet and troops of the enemy which lined the coast. The victory of Harold over the Norwegians was more prejudicial than favourable to his interest. He had lost many of his bravest officers and soldiers in the action ; and he is accused of having disgusted the rest by refusing to distribute the spoil of the battle among them. It is certain that Edwin and Morcar stood aloof ; even his wife, Alghitha, abandoned him to his fate ; and many of his veteran troops, from fatigue or discontent, deserted his colours. His brother Gurth, earl of Suffolk, remonstrated with him that it would be better policy, in his weakened condition, to prolong the war ; his mother, sad and weeping for the loss of her son Tostig, earnestly dissuaded him from attempting to give battle ; the chiefs reminded him of his oath of fealty, and that it would be perjury to fight against a prince to whom he had

<sup>12</sup> Matt. West. 435.—The tapestry of Bayeux, mentioned already, contains the description of the expedition, from its outset to its landing. In the preparation men are represented cutting down trees, and squaring them into planks ; others are arranging and hammering these materials into vessels ; men are seen carrying coats of mail, spears, swords, and other weapons, with wine and different sorts of provisions ; pulling ships after them by ropes, some of which are afterwards pictured as in full sail, with horses, and different implements of war on board. The circumstance of William's falling at his landing is detailed ; and the soldiers going out in quest of provisions. One man is seen leading a sheep, another with a pig, and a third looking at a bullock with an axe in his hand. Even the cooking, the serving up, and the enjoyment of the repast are wrought with appropriate inscriptions. Such was the elaborate finery with which the ladies of those days decorated and preserved the historical events of their times.

sworn submission. In the casuistry of that age no crime was reckoned more shameful, or more atrocious, than the treason of a vassal against his lord; and William seems to have been powerfully impressed with the notion, which he took care to propagate among his troops, that Heaven would not fail to punish the usurper for the violation of his solemn promise. But Harold was deaf to all these considerations. Elated with his past success, and stimulated with fresh hope, he determined to meet the invader immediately, and in person. Leaving York in the beginning of October, he hastened towards London, without taking time or pains to multiply his means of defence, attending to the suggestions of courage rather than of prudence, and looking upon the Normans as his devoted prey. So confident was he of victory, that he sent a message to the duke, offering him a sum of money if he would quit the kingdom without effusion of blood; but the compromise was rejected with disdain; and, not to be behind his enemy in vaunting, William sent a message by some monks, requiring him either to resign the crown, or to hold it of him in fealty, or to submit their cause to the arbitration of the pope; or to fight him in single combat. Harold had laughed at the religious scruples of his brother, and he treated the alternatives of his rival with the same contempt, answering, that the God of battles would soon be the arbiter of all their differences.<sup>13</sup> He had sent spies to inspect William's force; but the wary duke, who knew his strength, and had nothing to conceal, caused the spies to be well-feasted and led through his encampment. On returning to their master they described what they had seen; adding that, from their shaven faces, they should have taken the Normans for an army of divines. Harold smiled at the conceit, but had sense enough to remark that the divines would prove very formidable soldiers. Six days only he tarried in London to collect troops, and though some thousands joined his ranks, his impatient ardour was burning to encounter the insolent foe. He left the city, and marched all night towards Hastings. At Waltham there was a monastery for regular or conventual canons of the order of St Augustine, containing a crucifix supposed to be gifted with miraculous virtue. The abbey of the Holy Rood had been richly endowed by Harold, and before he set out against the enemy he offered up his orisons at the altar. Whilst the king was at prayer in the darkness and gloom of the choir, we are assured that the crucifix bowed its head. The portent may have been imaginary, but there was a presentiment of evil abroad. It was a time when men's minds are oppressed by the apprehension of impending danger, and the brethren of Waltham determined that ten members of the convent should accompany their benefactor on his march. In directing his course to the shore of Sussex, Harold hoped to surprise the army of the Normans as he had done that of the Norwegians; and in the presumptuous expectation of defeating and hemming them in, he sent round a fleet of seven hundred vessels to prevent William's escape. This measure was not only premature, but ill-judged, as it deprived him needlessly of a very numerous support by dispersing a great part of his forces in the seas where their exertions could have not the least influence on the approaching conflict, on which his rival ob-

<sup>13</sup> Rec. des Hist. de la France, tom. xiii. p. 231.

viously staked the whole issue of his adventure. In projecting to surprise the duke, Harold showed how little he understood of William's character. Constantly on the alert, he had timely intelligence of the English march. He recalled the detachment sent out to forage, and commanded his men in case of attack to remain all night under arms. He told them that they must prepare to conquer or die,—flight was impossible; and to evince his determination, he had caused all his ships to be drawn ashore and rendered unserviceable. Though stationed at Pevensey, he had personally surveyed all the adjoining country; for he never trusted this part of a general's duty to any eyes but his own.

The spot which Harold had selected for this important contest was at Senlac,<sup>14</sup> nine miles from Hastings, and now better known by the name of Battle. It was an eminence, opening to the south, and covered on the back by an extensive wood. His camp was surrounded by entrenchments, and in the centre waved the royal standard—the figure of a warrior in the act of fighting, woven in threads of gold, and ornamented with precious jewels. The site of the high altar of Battle abbey, erected afterwards, pointed out the place where it was fixed. By its side stood Harold and his two brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, and around them the rest of the army, every man on foot, for the cavalry had dismounted. As the troops arrived, he had posted them on the declivity in one compact and immense mass; adopting, in this arrangement, nearly the same plan which had proved so fatal to the Norwegians. For the purpose of more effectually opposing the Norman cavalry, the might of whose charge was irresistible, and as both men and horses were completely cased in armour, so as to render them almost invulnerable by ordinary weapons, Harold had brought with him engines to discharge stones among their ranks, and had recommended his soldiers to confine themselves, in close fight, to the use of the battle-axe, a heavy and murderous weapon. Meantime, William had quitted Hastings, and was employed in marshalling his host on the opposite hill. His army was divided into three lines. In the front he placed the archers and bowmen, commanded by Montgomery. The second line, led by Martel, was composed of heavy infantry, the bravest of his battalions, clothed in coats of mail, and ranged in close order. Behind these were the cavalry, in five divisions, headed by the duke in person, and so disposed, that they stretched beyond the infantry, and flanked each wing of the army. In putting on his armour, it happened that William inverted his coat of mail. This petty mistake the soldiers regarded as a fatal omen; but their gallant leader declared he had no faith in superstitious tales, and was resolved to trust himself and the result of his enterprise to the will of his Creator. Moreover, he animated their valour by an impressive harangue, reminding them of the exploits of their ancestors—of Rolla, the great founder of their nation, and their victories over the Franks. He represented to them the importance of the approaching conflict, and that the whole fortune of the war now depended on their swords. Both sides were prepared for the combat; but the aspect of things on the night before the battle was very different in the two camps. The English spent the time in

<sup>14</sup> Ord. Vital. 178.



wassail, riot, and disorder. The cup passed gaily round, by the smoky blaze of the red watch-fires; while the ballad of ribald mirth, sung by the carousers, resounded among their tents. The Normans devoted the night to prayer, and the other duties of religion. No sound was heard but the response of the litany, and the chaunt of the psalm. The penitents confessed their sins, the masses were said, and the apprehensions of the imminent perils of the morrow were tranquillized by penance and prayer.<sup>15</sup> William shared in the devotion of his troops, and received the sacrament. He hung round his neck the relics on which the perjured Harold had sworn, as if the curse of papal excommunication was sure to blight the unlawful hopes of an apostate and a usurper; and when he saw the English banner waving on the adjacent hill, he expressed his surprise at the effrontery of his rival in venturing his presence on the field, and his confidence that his breach of faith would on that day be punished. About nine in the morning (October 14), the Norman army began to move, crossed the interval between the two hills, and slowly ascended the eminence on which the English were posted. The banner of St Peter, as a presage of victory, was borne in the van by Tonstain the Fair—a dangerous honour, which two of the barons had successively declined. Harold beheld them gradually advance, and as the third division appeared, he broke out into violent exclamations of anger and dismay. He had the advantage of the ground, and having secured his flank by trenches, he resolved to stand upon the defensive, and to avoid all action with the cavalry, in which he was inferior. The men of Kent were placed in front, a privilege which they always claimed as their due. The Londoners had the honour of being the royal body-guard, and were posted around the standard. The king himself, on foot, took his station at the head of the infantry, determined to conquer, or perish in the action. The Normans rushed to the onset, shouting their national tocsin, “God is our help!”<sup>16</sup> which was loudly answered by the adverse cry of “Christ’s cross!—The holy cross!” Immediately before the duke rode Taillefer, the minstrel, singing with a strong and clear voice, the lay of Charlemagne and Roland, and the exploits of the paladins who had fallen in the mournful pass of Roncesvalles.<sup>17</sup> The bard, as his guerdon, craved permission to strike the first blow, for he was a brave warrior; and, accordingly, two Englishmen whom he attacked in succession, were felled to the ground. The battle soon became general, and raged with great fury. The Norman archers, advancing, discharged their weapons with effect; but they were received with equal valour by the English, who firmly kept their ground. After the first shower of arrows, they returned to the attack with spears and lances; and again they were obliged to retire, unable to make any impression on their opponents. William ordered the cavalry to charge. The shock was dreadful; but the English in every point presented a solid and impenetrable mass. Befriended by the elevation of the ground, they not merely maintained, but repelled, every assault of the enemy. Neither buckler nor corslet could withstand the stroke of the battle-axe wielded with a powerful arm and with unerring aim; and the confidence of the Normans melted away at the view of their own loss, and the bold bearing

<sup>15</sup> Roman de Rou.<sup>16</sup> Diex aïe! Ibid.<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p. 461.

of the adversary. The battle had continued with desperate obstinacy; and from nine till three in the afternoon, the success on either side was nearly balanced. Stones and missiles of all kinds were discharged incessantly; but the English soldiers were so well-protected by their targets, that the artillery of the foe was long discharged in vain. A body of Normans had advanced beyond their lines, and was driven back into the trenches, where horses and riders fell upon each other in fearful confusion. More of them were slain here than in any other part of the field. The alarm spread; and the foot and cavalry of Brittany, which composed the left wing, gave way, and betook themselves to flight. The panic extended along the whole line; and the confusion was increased by a rumour that the duke had fallen. It was a critical moment. William found his hopes on the brink of destruction, and he hastened with a select band to the relief of his dismayed forces. Rushing among the fugitives, and riding along the line with his helmet in his hand, he exclaimed, "I am still alive; and, with the help of God, I still shall conquer!"<sup>18</sup> His presence and boldness restored the action; and the English, who had incautiously pursued the fugitives, were intercepted in their return by a body of the enemy, and not a man survived. This partial defeat was fondly magnified into an assurance of victory. But though William had renewed the attack with fresh forces and redoubled courage, the English columns, dense and immovable as a rock amidst the waves, resisted every attempt. They were animated by the presence and example of Harold, who made every possible exertion, and was distinguished as the most active and intrepid among the soldiers of his host, sharing with them, on foot, the danger and glory of the field. The battle again grew desperate. Distant weapons were abandoned for closer conflict. The clamour of the soldiers was drowned in the clashing of their weapons and the groans of the dying. The Norman bowmen seeing they had failed to make any impression on the iron phalanx of the enemy, altered the direction of their shafts, and instead of shooting point-blank, the arrows were directed upwards, so that the points came down on the heads of the English with murderous effect. Their ranks were exceedingly annoyed by these destructive volleys; yet still they stood firm, and made a vigorous resistance. Disappointed and perplexed at seeing his troops everywhere repulsed by an unbroken wall of courageous soldiers, the Norman general had recourse to a stratagem, suggested by the success with which his flying squadrons had turned on their pursuers. He resolved to hazard a feigned retreat; and a body of a thousand horse were ordered to take flight. The artifice was successful. The credulous English, in the heat of action, followed; but their temerity was speedily punished with terrible slaughter. The same feint was tried with equal success in another part of the field; for the duke with his main body had rushed between the pursuers and the rest of their countrymen. The loss was considerable, and thinned the number of the English; still the great body of the army maintained its position; for so long as Harold lived and fought, they seemed to be invincible. During the engagement, William had given the most signal proofs of personal bravery. Three horses had been killed under him; and he

<sup>18</sup> *Vivo, et vincam, opitulante Deo.*—Guil. Pict. p. 202.

had been compelled to grapple on foot with his adversaries. In various assaults, his sword had marked his path with carnage; and it is said he repeatedly sought to measure his strength with Harold, who, on his part, had also displayed a courage worthy of the crown for which he was contending. The sun was departing from the western horizon, but the victory was yet undecided. Two of the bravest of the English leaders, Gurth and Leofwin, had perished by the side of the royal standard; but so long as the king survived, no man entertained the apprehension of defeat, or admitted the idea of flight. A little before sunset, an arrow, shot at random, pierced his eye: he dropped from his steed in agony; and the knowledge of his fall relaxed the efforts of his followers. The splendid laurel seemed now within the reach of the competitor. He ordered his heavy-armed infantry to make a last desperate assault, while the archers, placed behind, should gall the enemy thus exposed, and occupied in defending themselves against the swords and spears of their assailants. A furious charge of the Norman horse increased the confusion which the king's wound must have occasioned. Twenty of them undertook to seize the royal banner of Harold, having pledged themselves to die by each other's side. They effected their purpose, but with the loss of half their number. Discouraged and overwhelmed, the English began to give way. A few troops, however, had still the courage to maintain the conflict. The field for a time was covered with separate bands of combatants, each engaged desperately with one another. Here the English yielded—there they conquered; individuals signalized their prowess, and the battle-axes dealt mutual destruction. Such was the general enthusiasm, that, though exhausted by loss of blood and strength, they still fought on; the more disabled striving, by their voice and gestures, to rally their friends. For a time, the Kentish men and East Saxons seemed to retrieve the fortune of the day. They repelled the Norman barons; but Harold was not among them, and William was pushing on with ruthless intrepidity. At length the English banner was cut down, and the papal colours erected in its place, announced that William of Normandy was the conqueror. It was now late in the evening, but such was the obstinacy of the vanquished, that they continued the struggle in many parts of the bloody field long after dark. The fugitives spread themselves over the adjoining country, then covered with wood and morass. Wherever they could make a stand they resisted, obtaining some revenge for the slaughter and dishonour of the day. The Normans followed their tract by the light of the moon; but their ignorance of the country led them into deep and miry ground, where the natives attacked them with unsparing vengeance. Attracted by the cries of the combatants, William was hastening to the place, when he met Eustace of Boulogne, with fifty knights, fleeing with all their speed. He called on them to stop; but the earl, while he was in the act of whispering into the ear of the duke, received a stroke on the back which forced the blood out of his mouth and nostrils: he was carried in a state of insensibility to his tent. Undismayed by this accident, William led on his men in the pursuit. Darkness and flight was now the only safety of the vanquished; and thus was won the famous and hard-earned victory of Hastings, which seemed worthy, by the heroic valour displayed on both sides, and by both commanders, to



decide the fate of a mighty kingdom. The carnage was great. On the part of the conquerors, nearly sixty thousand men had been engaged, and of these more than one-fourth were left dead on the field. The number of the English and the amount of their loss, are unknown. The vanity of the Normans has exaggerated the army of the enemy beyond the bounds of credibility; but the native writers reduce it to a handful of resolute warriors. The historians of both countries agree, that with Harold and his brothers perished all the nobility of the south of England. Harold's body was sought and discovered. His mother begged the dead corpse of her son; and the monk of Malmesbury informs us, that William surrendered it without a ransom. Those, however, who lived nearer the time, relate, in explicit terms, that though Alghitha offered its weight in gold, a sum which has been calculated, on the average weight of the human body, at eleven thousand guineas, the duke refused.<sup>19</sup> Resentment had rendered him callous to pity, and he ordered the royal carcase to be buried on the beach, adding, with a sneer, "he guarded the coast while he was alive; let him continue to guard it after death." This is the account as given by the chaplain of the Conqueror, William, of Poitiers, a most trustworthy and competent witness. By stealth, however, or by purchase, the remains of the unhappy monarch were removed from this contemptuous sepulchre, and deposited in the church of Waltham, which he had himself founded before he ascended the throne. The legends of that convent have a different story. According to them, the two brethren who had accompanied Harold, hovered as nearly as possible to the scene of action, watching the event of the battle; and when the strife had ceased, they humbly solicited the permission of William to seek the corpse. The Conqueror refused a purse containing ten marks of gold, which they offered as the tribute of their gratitude; but he allowed them to bear away not only the remains of Harold, but of all who had chosen, when living, the abbey of Waltham as their place of sepulture. Amongst the loathsome heaps of unburied dead they long sought in vain,—no trace of Harold could be found; and as they lost hope of identifying his remains, they brought his beloved wife Editha, supposing she would best recognise the features so familiar to her affections. The two canons and the sorrowing widow resumed their miserable task in the charnel-field, until a corpse was at last selected by Editha, and conveyed to Waltham, where it was entombed at the east end of the choir, with great honour and solemnity, many Norman nobles assisting at the obsequies. Another tradition alleges Harold to have escaped; and that a decrepit anchorite, who inhabited a cell near the abbey of St John, at Chester, and was blind of a left eye, declared on his death-bed, that he was the last of the Saxon kings. This tale, though romantic, may have some probability; but it matters little as to the place or circumstances of Harold's inhumation,—the spot where his standard had been cut down, was the grave of the pride and glory of England. The victory of Hastings was truly splendid; but had the king not fallen, it would not have been sufficient to gain the crown of England. It was this disaster that gave William the sceptre. There was no heir to whom the throne could descend; there was no chief of

<sup>19</sup> Guil. Pict. 138.

enterprise disposed to seize the dignity, or appeal to the country for its support. The Norman, therefore, found a vacant empire, and a nation without a leader. On the evening of the action he ordered a space to be cleared near the holy standard, and his pavilion to be pitched among the corpses which were heaped around. He there supped with his barons, and they feasted among the dead. But when he surveyed the fearful slaughter, a natural feeling of pity, perhaps allied to repentance, arose in his stern mind; and the abbey of Battle, in which prayer was to be offered up perpetually for the repose of the souls of all who had fallen in the conflict, was at once the monument of his triumph and the evidence of his piety. The abbey was most richly endowed, possessing all the land for a league round. The abbot was exempted from the authority of the metropolitan of Canterbury; the high altar was erected on the spot where Harold's standard had waved; and the roll, deposited in the archives of the monastery, recorded the names of those who had fought with the Conqueror. But all this pomp and solemnity has passed away like a dream. The 'perpetual prayer' has ceased for ever; the roll of victorious nobility is rent; the shields of the Norman lineages are trodden in the dust; the abbey is levelled with the ground; a dank and reedy pool fills the spot where the foundations of the choir have been uncovered, to gratify the gaze of the idle visitor, or the prying curiosity of the antiquary.

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## II. ECCLESIASTICAL SERIES.

### INTRODUCTION.

Druidism—Introduction of Christianity into Britain—Lucius—St Alban—Pelagius—Augustine—St Keby—Sigebert—Aidan—Disputes regarding the observance of Easter—Theodore—Biscop—Brithwald—Tatwin—Cuthbert.

THE system of druidism prevailed universally in Britain when Cæsar first planted the Roman eagle on our shores. Its doctrines are said to have been very mysterious and sublime, requiring a noviciateship of twenty years to qualify for the priesthood; but as it was forbidden to reduce them to writing, many of the tenets of druidism perished with the last of the druids, and no distinct account can now be given of this remarkable form of polytheism. It existed, however, in Britain for a considerable time after it had disappeared in Gaul and Germany; and was revived in a modified form, first by the Saxons, and afterwards by the Danes. Hence we find Canute, so late as the 11th century, forbidding his subjects "to worship the gods of the Gentiles, that is to say, the sun, moon, fires, rivers, fountains, hills, trees, or woods of any kind." The religion of the Anglo-Saxons, Mr Palgrave considers to have been "a compound of the worship of the celestial bodies—or Sabæism, as it is termed—and of hero worship." But they seem, on their arrival in Britain, to have easily adapted their religious ritual to the ministrations of a druidical hierarchy.

The introduction of Christianity into this country has been made the subject of many ingenious and interesting speculations. When, or by whom, however, the inestimable blessing of evangelical truth was first communicated to the inhabitants of Britain, are questions which admit of no positive answer.<sup>1</sup> Curiosity is not unworthily exercised on such a theme; but in the absence of plain and credible authorities it may be doubted whether it be not wiser to repress than excite it, and better to guide it to a more promising point of sight than to give it hopes of seeing through an almost, if not quite, impenetrable darkness. The wide diffusion of Christianity among the Romans before the end of the first century, and the intercourse which they held with this island, renders it highly probable that the Gospel was preached here at that early period. Every Christian was then a missionary, if providence carried him to a foreign country; and there is the strongest reason to believe, that long before the heads of the church conceived the idea of sending its messengers to Britain, private individuals, animated with a ready zeal, and directed by the rules of their faith, had already disseminated the seeds of truth both among their countrymen established here, and the natives.

General tradition appears to point out King Lucius, a British prince, as one of the first persons, who, possessing power and rank, undertook to establish Christianity in the island as the national religion. Great doubts, however, exist as to the period when this excellent man flourished. The earliest date assigned for his conversion is the year 99, and the latest 190. In the annals of Burton it is stated to have taken place in 137: Bede fixes it in 167; Matthew Paris in 185; and John Harding in 190. But whenever it occurred, it is manifest that much had been already done in instructing the people. Lucius is himself said to have been converted by some of the persons who had taken upon themselves the duty of teachers, and to have applied soon after to the bishop of Rome for help in the establishment of the new religion. There can be little doubt therefore but that England had early shown a readiness to receive instructors in the faith, and that the progress which the new religion made among them was similar to what it had been in other countries: Gildas, in describing the state of Christianity here at this period, says, that "although its doctrines were received in but a cautious manner (*tepidè suscepta sunt*) by the generality of the natives, with some they were entirely embraced, and with others

<sup>1</sup> Baronius does not hesitate to represent the apostle Peter himself as the proto-evangelist of Britain; but his only authority for such a statement is that of Simeon Metaphrastes, an ecclesiastical biographer of the 10th century. Archbishop Usher has quoted several old writers in support of the opinion that the apostle James carried the Gospel into Britain. But, if the very slender evidence which we possess on this subject is to be relied on at all, it would afford the best presumption in favour of St Paul, who is represented by Clemens Romanus as having preached the Gospel to 'the utmost bounds of the west,' and whom Theodoret, a prelate of the 5th century, indicates to have been the first instructor of the Britons in the religion of Christ. The question whether Paul did or did not visit Britain has been discussed with great keenness as well as ability, by Dr Burgess in his 'Origin and Independence of the British Church,' and Dr Hales in his 'Essay on the Origin and Purity of the Primitive Church of the British Isles:' the former taking the affirmative, the latter the negative side of the question. We pass over in silence the tradition that Joseph of Arimathea visited Britain about the year 63, and erected a Christian church on the spot afterwards occupied by the abbey of Glastonbury. It is evidently a mere monkish tradition, and rests on the single authority of William of Malmesbury.



partially, to the breaking out of the Diocletian persecution."<sup>2</sup> Two of the fathers, Tertullian and Origen, are also quoted to show the extent to which the Gospel had been embraced in this age. The former says, that there were places in Britain which were inaccessible to the Romans, but yet subdued to Christ; and the latter, that the power of God our Saviour was with them.

The remote situation of this country did not save it from the scourge of persecution. "God," it is eloquently said, "though he made our church his darling, would not make it a wanton; she must taste of the rod with the rest of her sisters; the fiery trial, spoken of by the apostle, now found out even those which by water were divided from the rest of the world."<sup>3</sup> Saint Alban, a citizen of Verulam, and who owed his conversion to a fugitive Welsh preacher, was the first Englishman who shed his blood in the cause of Christianity. His martyrdom was followed by that of many others. Augulus, bishop of Augusta, or London, is mentioned in the number; and the sufferings to which the infant church was thus exposed did not cease till the accession of Constantius Chlorus to the government of the Western provinces. So great a change now took place in the affairs of the Christians, that ten years after the death of Saint Alban, a handsome church was erected in commemoration of his martyrdom, and we soon after find that the English bishops were possessed of sufficient dignity and influence to occupy seats in the first councils that were summoned for the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. In the council of Ariminum, the English bishops were among the few who refused to accept the provision allowed them at the cost of the emperor, and it has been thence inferred that the condition of the British prelates must have been superior to that of their brethren in many other parts of the world, those only of France being mentioned as following the same course.<sup>4</sup>

But in the latter part of the fourth century, the church established here gave birth to a man, whose talents and heresy have rendered his name one of the most conspicuous on the rolls of ecclesiastical antiquity. This was the celebrated Pelagius, a native of Britain, and a monk of the monastery at Bangor. Circumstances, of which probably the chief was the desire of extending his knowledge, carried him to Rome, where he soon became conspicuous both for virtue and ability. With him was associated another monk, named Celestius, and who is generally said to have been a native of Ireland, a country which was at a very early period noted for the progress of the Gospel among its inhabitants. So highly esteemed was Pelagius during the former part of his residence at Rome, that he numbered among his acquaintances the most celebrated men of the age. Saint Augustine admired the talents and piety of this English monk, and so firmly did he appear settled in orthodoxy, that some treatises which he wrote were regarded as a useful addition to the stores of cotemporary theology. But about the year 400, a Syrian named Rufinus brought to Rome the unscriptural doctrine of the perfectibility of human virtue, independently of divine grace. Pelagius and his friend, rendered confident, perhaps, in the strength of man's nature by the reputation they had acquired for sanctity, eagerly embraced the heresy, and soon became conspicuous for their

<sup>2</sup> Epist. de Excidio Britt.

<sup>3</sup> Fuller, b. I, Cen. IV.

<sup>4</sup> Dupin, vol. ii. p. 263, 4th Cent.

activity in disseminating the errors of which it consisted.<sup>5</sup> They taught that Adam was naturally mortal, and must have died even although he had not sinned; that the sin of Adam affected only himself, and was not imputed to his posterity; that children at their birth are as pure and innocent as Adam was at his creation; that divine grace is not necessary to enable men to live acceptably to God; in short, that man, by his own unassisted powers, may work out his own salvation. On the approach of the Goths in the year 410, they left Rome and proceeded to Sicily, whence they sailed to Africa. In the town of Hippo, the seat of the great Augustine's bishopric, Pelagius is said to have avoided making his doctrines known, and to have passed, without delay, into Palestine, where he remained a considerable time. Celestius, in the meanwhile, took up his sojourn at Carthage, where his opinions were formally condemned by a synod held in the year 412. At length their heresy became a subject of general inquiry in the church at large, and, after a brief struggle, its authors and defenders found themselves obliged to submit to the eloquence of Augustine, and the power with which he was supported by the popes and the councils.

But the condemnation of Pelagius and his associates had not the effect of rooting up the seed which they had so widely scattered. In England, the infection of Arianism, and that of this later heresy appears to have taken a strong hold of the popular mind, and the nation having thus become unsettled respecting the first principles of its faith, it only required that distress which followed the inroads of the Scots and Picts, when the Romans had left the island without defence, to blight most of the hopes which the Christians of other countries might fairly, at an earlier period, have cherished for the British. The invasion of the idolatrous Saxons contributed still further to produce this evil, and it is but too probable, that the doctrines of the Gospel retained little of their influence except among the few obscure fugitives who preserved their liberty and their faith in solitude. That there were instances of ardent devotion among the British, we learn from the fact, that about the beginning of the fifth century they began to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, while the piety of Saint Keby, son of the duke of Cornwall, appears to have equalled that of the most distinguished anchorets of the age. But whether these acts or instances of sanctity had any permanent effect on the natives in general, or whether under the oppressions of the Saxons they continued to lose first one and then another article of their creed, till the truth was no longer recognized among them, is a question which still admits of much inquiry and argument.

It was about the year 570 when the celebrated Gregory employed the zeal and the treasures of Rome to renew the smothered light of Christianity in England. From that period a new prospect dawned slowly on the few who were capable of observation, while the many experienced an amelioration in their condition,—a changing of the elements of social life in their favour,—which they gradually learned to ascribe to the influence of the Gospel, and in learning that truth, took a higher station both as moral and as social beings. The means of instruction which Augustine and his fellow-missionaries had the opportunity of employing were at first few and limited; but in proportion to

<sup>5</sup> Fleury, t. i. l. 23.—Mosheim, vol. ii. p. 86.

their success, the church at Rome deemed it expedient to increase its attention to the newly converted Saxons, and the continual influx of ardent and zealous preachers from the most enlightened quarters of Europe could scarcely fail of being followed by very important advantages. This mission introduced the literature of Rome into England; for what of it may have before existed in Britain, had, by this time, utterly disappeared. The Roman classics and fathers were now put into the hands of the clergy; even a little Greek, it would appear from Bede, was added to their accomplishments, although there is sufficient evidence from the manner in which the Lord's prayer was read in the original text, that the priests could do nothing more than affect to read it.

The utmost efforts of Augustine failed, however, to induce the British clergy to acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of Rome. Among the fastnesses of Cumbria, a few families still preserved the doctrines and practice of Christianity as known to their ancestors. Amongst other peculiarities they obstinately adhered to the oriental mode of celebrating Easter, and resolutely refused either to yield in this respect, or to submit themselves to the papal authority. Dinoh, abbot of Bangor, in name of his brethren, declared that they owed no other obedience to the person known by the name of the Pope than what was due in brotherly love from one Christian to another; and that, with respect to the discipline and ritual of the church, they followed in these the injunctions of the bishop of Caerleon. Augustine, unable to convince them of their errors, is reported to have concluded a stormy debate by exclaiming,—“ Since you refuse peace from your brethren, you shall have war from your enemies! And since you will not co-operate with us in preaching the word of life to the Saxons, you shall receive death at their hands!” The massacre of twelve hundred monks at Bangor by Ethelfred, is supposed by some historians to have been instigated by Augustine, in order to bring about the completion of his prophecy; but there is want of evidence on this point; nay, it is almost certain, that that transaction took place after the death of Augustine. Jortin, adopting the unfavourable view of Augustine's character, has not hesitated to call him a ‘pretended apostle and sanctified ruffian,’—‘a most audacious and insolent monk,’ whose Christianity “seemed to consist principally in two things,—in keeping Easter upon a proper day, and to be slaves to our sovereign Lord God the Pope, and to Austin, his deputy and vicegerent.”<sup>6</sup> But this is unseemly and unjust abuse. We have no evidence whatever that Augustine resorted to force in his endeavours to bring over the Welsh schismatics to his way of thinking; and as to the importance of the subject of controversy betwixt them, we can hardly do justice to the feelings of a Benedictine monk of the 6th century on these points. The pope, however, rewarded the zeal of his missionary with the metropolitan see of England, and Augustine fixed upon Canterbury for the site of his cathedral. The present cathedral of Canterbury is built upon the spot selected by Augustine for this purpose; but the original building was destroyed by fire in the 11th century.

Unfortunately, the successors of Augustine gradually declined in that sincere devotion to the objects of their mission which seems to

<sup>6</sup> Eccl. Hist. vol. iv. p. 417.



have inspired that eminent man and his companions. The desire of aggrandizement, the regard for superstitious rites, the pride and pomp of the Romish church, were speedily diffused like a leaven among the English proselytes, and they were no sooner subdued to its yoke than they were left to themselves, and the imperfect tuition of native priests. This will in some degree account for the miserable condition in which learning was found even in the reign of Alfred. That enlightened prince, it is well known, is said to have complained that 'he knew not one person south of the Thames who could so much as interpret the Latin service; and that very few in the northern parts knew, even as much as was known in the former division.'<sup>6</sup> In the period, however, which intervened between the coming of Augustine, and the age of the venerable Bede, slow as was the progress of intelligence, some few men arose who have a just claim to be regarded, considering the age in which they lived, with mingled respect and interest. Among the first of the Saxon princes, who laboured with earnestness in the establishment of Christianity, was Sigebert, king of the East-Angles. During a long exile in France, he had learnt the importance of education to a country; and, on succeeding to his little dominion, he assiduously strove to profit by the experience he had gained. Bede says that he instituted a school, in which boys might be instructed in letters;<sup>7</sup> and it is commonly supposed that the school here mentioned, was the beginning of the university of Cambridge. The historian adds, that the king was assisted in his pious endeavours by a bishop named Felix, who came out of Kent, and supplied him with teachers and masters, after the custom which was followed in that province. This fact confirms what has been said respecting the intellectual improvement which followed, as an almost inseparable consequence, the planting of Christianity. Kent was become a nursery for scholars, while the rest of the county lay in darkness, and in proportion as the same influences there extended to other quarters of the nation, we see, with very few modifications, the same changes and improvements. Ireland had already, for some time, enjoyed the light of the Gospel, and during the reign of Sigebert, a preacher named Furseus, came from thence, who, after having converted a number of persons by the piety of his life, and the many graces he possessed, founded a monastery, which became a school for the young, as well as an asylum for the aged. In Ireland itself, several devout Englishmen sought that instruction which they could not obtain at home, and it is recorded to the honour of the natives of that country, that they were better able to enjoy among them sacred study, and a continent life, than in their native land.<sup>8</sup> Of these voluntary exiles, some devoted themselves to a monastic life, and others employed their time in going from one place to another, seeking the conversation of the men most distinguished for their piety and knowledge.

In 634, Oswald, king of Northumbria, who had been educated in Scotland, sent for some of the ecclesiastics of that country to instruct his people in Christianity. Aidan of Iona undertook this mission, and conducted its affairs with great success for seventeen years. He fixed the episcopal see in the little island of Lindisfarn, off the coast of North-

<sup>6</sup> Turner's Hist. of Anglo-Saxons.

<sup>7</sup> Eccl. Hist., lib. iii. cap. 18.

Id., lib. iii. cap. 27.

umberland, contrary to Pope Gregory's regulation, who had ordered the principal see for the northern parts of Britain to be at York. On his death, in 652, Finan, another monk of Iona, succeeded to the government of the Northumbrian church. Bede, while he pronounces the zeal of both these Scottish prelates to have been 'without knowledge,' because they adhered to the oriental mode of keeping Easter, confesses that the veneration with which their conduct had inspired all classes, protected them from all annoyance on this account. But as soon as Colman, another Scots monk, had succeeded Finan in the see of Lindisfarn, the dispute on this important point was renewed with more warmth than ever; and Oswy was finally prevailed upon to convocate a council in the nunnery of Hilda at Whitby, in order to put forth a solemn decision which might set the question at rest for ever. At this conference, Colman, and Ceadda, bishop of the East Saxons, with Oswy himself, appeared on behalf of the Scottish party; the Romanists were headed by Agilbert, bishop of Paris, James, the deacon, a disciple of Paulinus, Agathon and Wilfrid, two priests of the Roman church, and Enflada, Oswy's queen. Colman opened the debate, and defended his case by pleading the practice of his predecessors, and the example of the beloved apostle. Agilbert was appointed to reply, but excused himself on account of his insufficient acquaintance with the English language; whereupon Wilfrid assumed the office of respondent, and answered Colman with great warmth. He explained the manner of fixing Easter adopted by his church, and affirmed that it was supported by the practice of all other Christian churches in the world, those only of the Scots, Picts, and Britons excepted. Colman argued that if Wilfrid and his brethren were correct in this, then was the apostle John chargeable with error. Wilfrid met this argument by saying that John was obliged to conform somewhat to the rites of Judaism for fear of giving offence to the Asiatic Jews. He asserted that the church of Rome exactly followed the practice of St Peter and St Paul in this matter. He then triumphantly demanded of Colman whether he would pretend to compare his own St Columba with Peter, the prince of the apostles. We are not informed what answer Colman made to this last speech; but the result of the conference was, that Oswy gave his voice in favour of Wilfrid, and his decision confirmed the vote of the assembly. The same synod took up the controversy about the ecclesiastical tonsure. The Romanists maintained that the head ought to be shaved round the place where our Saviour wore the crown of thorns; but the Scottish priests shaved the fore-part of the head from ear to ear. Bede does not inform us how this point was decided; but the probability is that it too was gained by the Romanists. On this decision, Colman and his adherents retired into Scotland, and Scotsmen were henceforth carefully excluded from the government of the Northumbrian church.

About this period, the kings of Kent and Northumberland held a conference respecting the state of the church, and conceiving it necessary to obtain the pope's sanction to the election of a new bishop, the prelate whom they had nominated was sent to Rome for the purpose of receiving his consecration at the hands of the supreme pontiff. But he died before the ceremony took place, and the pope immediately proceeded to search for some person capable of filling the vacant office

with dignity. The power which he thus assumed to himself appears to have been willingly ceded to him by the English princes, and in this instance it was exercised in a manner highly beneficial to the nation. His choice first fell on the abbot of a monastery near Naples, a native of Africa, and a man of great learning as well as piety. But his offer was rejected, and the devout Adrian contented himself with recommending first one, and then another of his friends, to the pontiff's notice. Theodorus, a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, was at length appointed to the arduous station. He was at this time sixty-six years of age,—was distinguished for his acquirements in general as well as sacred literature,—for his skill in both the Greek and Latin language,—and for the excellency of his manners and character. Notwithstanding, however, of his fitness for the station, the pope insisted on Adrian's accompanying him to England, that he might aid him with his counsel and co-operation. The good abbot assented to this arrangement, and soon after their arrival at Canterbury, Theodore appointed him to the monastery of Saint Peter, in which situation he was enabled to enjoy his former course of life, while his presence was of the most important service to the archbishop.<sup>9</sup>

Bede describes in glowing terms the success which attended the labours of these two distinguished men, and remarks, that the Saxons had never witnessed such a happy time as the period of Theodore's prelacy, from their first arrival in England. There is great reason to believe that this was not an incorrect statement. Both the archbishop and the abbot were admirably calculated for the station they occupied. Instead of being mere monks, and possessing only the learning of monks, they were reputed for their experience in secular affairs, and their power of imparting information on every branch of science. The school, consequently, which they opened was crowded with auditors. Poetry, astronomy, and arithmetic, were comprehended within the circle of their instructions. The classics both of Greece and Rome began to be read under their auspices; and the practice of composition in the ancient languages was so closely pursued, that the historian states there were many of their pupils who could write as well in Latin and Greek as in their own tongue. But while thus attending with the care of an enlightened scholar to the diffusion of knowledge among the younger members of his flock, Theodore was not unmindful of the charge which pertained to him in respect to the discipline of the church. Soon after his arrival in England, he made a tour through the country, ordaining bishops in several new districts, and instituting such rites as he thought most essential to the wants of the people. Success attended him in his labours. The disputes respecting the time of keeping the festival of Easter had separated one part of the people from another, to the great hindrance of Christian brotherhood; but, Theodore, by his zeal and ability, removed many of the evils which had so nearly ruined the cause of Christianity; and he was the first of the English bishops to whom the whole body of the clergy yielded the right of primacy. In ecclesiastical history, Theodore stands forth conspicuously as the first among the Latins who composed a penitential. This work of his consisted of canons digested from the

<sup>9</sup> Bede, Eccles. Hist. iv. c. 2.



acts of the principal councils, and soon became the rule of penitential discipline in all the western provinces.<sup>10</sup> From the directions which it contains, we are enabled to form some idea of the trammels under which the most eminent and accomplished men of this period pursued their pious endeavours to enlighten their fellow-creatures. Masses for the dead,—rites which must ever burthen instead of instruct,—and the most minute attention to circumstances in themselves indifferent,—all appear from this rule of penitence to have been regarded even by the erudite, as among the first essentials of Christian duty.

Theodore, by the strictness of his discipline, produced, there can be little doubt, many appearances of improvement where no real progress was made; this is strongly evidenced by the retrograde movement which seemed, according to the testimony of Bede, to have taken place almost immediately after his decease. But he was an extraordinary man, and the taste for study which he introduced, the example he set of importing copies of the most valuable of the classics, and of the Greek and Latin fathers, together with his conscientious attention to many public affairs that bore on the interests of religion, mainly contributed to produce that bright era of Saxon literature and refinement, adorned with the names of Aldhelm, Ceolfrid, Alcuine, and Bede. Theodore, however, it is to be observed, was not left unaided in his labours by the Saxons of his time. Benedict Biscop was in every way worthy of being the coadjutor of such a man. His taste led him to the encouragement of a species of luxury which, at the time when he lived, afforded an assistance to the yet infant arts, without which they would have long remained in obscurity. The library which he collected was regarded as of inestimable value in the subsequent age,<sup>11</sup> and through his instrumentality, Weremouth abbey, of which he was the superior, remained till a late date one of the noblest depositories of learning in the country.

The primacy of Brithwald, the successor of Theodore, extended over the long period of forty years. He was the first archbishop of Canterbury of Saxon birth. His successor Tatwin was contemporary with Egbert, bishop of York, who, having received the pall from Rome, exercised metropolitan power over all the Anglo-Saxon bishops to the north of the Humber; and further distinguished himself by founding a library at York. In the earlier periods of Anglo-Saxon history, the dioceses were of the same extent as the respective kingdoms of the heptarchy. About the time of Egbert's promotion to the see of York, the number of English prelates was sixteen, whose sees were as follow: Canterbury and Rochester, in the kingdom of Kent; London, in that of the East-Saxons; Hereford, Leicester, Worcester, Lichfield, and Sydnacester, or Lindsey, in Mercia; Dunwick and Elmham, in East-Anglia; Winchester and Sherborn, in the West-Saxon kingdom; and York, Lindisfarne, and Hexham, in that of Northumberland; besides Whitherne in Galloway, then subject to the Northumbrian monarch.<sup>12</sup>

Tatwin was succeeded in the see of Canterbury by Northelm, at whose death, Cuthbert, bishop of Hereford, was invested with the metropolitan dignity, in 741. Under the last-mentioned primate, a great national synod was held at Cloveshoo—supposed to be the present

<sup>10</sup> Dupin, vol. vi. p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> Warton's Diss. on Introduc. of Learning into England.

<sup>12</sup> Bede, V.

Abington in Berkshire—at which all the bishops and clergy to the south of the Humber attended. This council drew up a body of twenty-eight canons for the future regulation of the church, most of them relating to ecclesiastical discipline, the government of monasteries, the duties of the several orders of clergy, the public service of the church, and the observance of the sabbath and holidays.<sup>13</sup> The 10th of these canons directs that the priests be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrines of Christianity, and that they shall teach the people the Apostles' creed, and the Lord's prayer, in English. The 26th warns Christians against vainly imagining that by alms-deeds they may atone for their sins, or dispense with the discipline of the church. The 27th is curious, and sufficiently illustrates the tendency of the age. It was a special enactment suggested by the case of a rich layman who, having been excommunicated for gross offences, petitioned to be re-admitted to church privileges on the ground of his having procured several persons to fast in his stead, and thus perform penance in his name, equivalent to a fast of three hundred years by one individual. The canon pronounced this notable device a piece of intolerable presumption, and denied the prayer of the petitioner.

The history of the ecclesiastics of this period forms the most striking portion of the national annals; their influence was every where felt and obeyed. The people and the prince acknowledged their worth with like reverence. They were the arbiters of taste, as well as the sole stewards of knowledge, and society at large was not less under their guidance than the church.

We are now somewhat prepared to introduce our series of ecclesiastical sketches, which, as well for the sake of continuity of narrative, as on account of the interesting nature of our materials, we shall commence with the life of

## Aldhelm, Bishop of Sherborne.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 639.—DIED A. D. 709.

ALDHELM may be regarded as one of the fathers of English literature; and it is with the view of introducing a few brief notices of the state of learning in England during his time, rather than of amplifying any portion of the above rapid sketch of ecclesiastical history, that we devote a distinct memoir to the life of this Saxon prelate.

According to some historians, Aldhelm was the son of Kenrid, brother of Ina, king of the West Saxons; but Malmesbury doubts this, alleging that Ina had no other brother than Inigald, and that if he was indeed the uncle of Aldhelm, then he must have had a nephew nearly seventy years old, when he himself was yet in the flower of youth.<sup>1</sup> He was born at Caer-Bladon in Wiltshire, and educated partly abroad, and partly in 'the renowned schoole' of Adrian at Canterbury. To Maidulphus an Irish Scot, he is also said to have been considerably indebted for that learning which afterwards gained for him so high a reputation. On the death of Hedda, bishop of the West Saxons, the king-

<sup>13</sup> Spelm. Conc. I. 242.

<sup>1</sup> Apud, Whart. Angl. Sac. vol. II. p. 2.

dom of Wessex was divided into two dioceses, Winchester and Sherborne, and King Ina promoted Aldhelm to the latter, comprehending Dorsetshire, Wiltshire, Devonshire, and Cornwall. He received consecration at Rome from the hands of Pope Sergius I. whose incontinency he had the boldness to reprove to his face.<sup>2</sup>

Aldhelm of course took his part in the great controversy which then divided the English church respecting the celebration of Easter. At the request of a diocesan synod, he wrote a book upon this edifying point, which Bede assures us opened the eyes of a great many Britons to their 'inveterate error' in not conforming to the Catholic usage. It was published by Sonius in 1576. He likewise wrote a book, partly in prose, and partly in hexameter verse, in praise of virginity, which is inserted amongst Bede's *Opuscula*. Of his other literary performances, the subjects of a few may be here mentioned as a kind of index to the learning of the times. In the '*Bibliotheca Patrum*' of Canisius, there is a Latin treatise of Aldhelm's on the eight principal virtues, and the fight of the eight principal vices. Malmesbury mentions a treatise of Aldhelm's on the dignity of the number seven, another in praise of the monastic life, and several rhetorical works. Bale informs us that he wrote a number of homilies, epistles, and sonnets, in the Saxon tongue; and in a letter written to Hedda by Aldhelm himself, we find him speaking in very extravagant terms of the excellence and dignity of arithmetical science.<sup>3</sup> In "compounding, pronouncing, and singing verses and songs in his mother-tongue," he is said to have been "admirably excellent." "And in king Elfred's (Alfred) time"—says Father Porter, whose quaint language graces such a subject as this—"manie of Saint Aldelme's ditties were yet sung in England. One thing related of this purpose by king Elfred"—continues this zealous Benedictine father—"is most worthie of memorie. The people of those times being yet but rude rustiks, and verie negligent in the diuine seruice, seemed to come to church but for fashion sake (as manie now adaies doe) where they made noe long stay, but as soone as the misterie of masse was done, they flocked homewards without anie more adoe. Our prudent Aldelme perceauing this small deuotion in the people, placed himself on a bridge ouer which they were to passe from church to their villages, where when the hastie multitude of people came (whose minds were already in their beef-pott at home) he began to putt forth his voyce with all the musicall art he could, and charmed their ears with his songs. For which, when he grew to be gratefull and plausible to that rude poeple, and perceaued that his songs flowed into their eares and minds to the greate pleasure and contentment of both, he beganne by little and little to mingle his ditties with more serious and holy matters taken out of the holy scripture, and by that meanes brought them in time to a feeling of devotion and to spend the sundaies and holy daies with farre greater profit to their owne soules."<sup>4</sup> To excel in singing, and in playing upon the harp, are often-mentioned as accomplishments of the ancient Saxon ecclesiastics; and in an ancient chronicle, found by Leland at Barnewell, Aldhelm is described as having been 'citha-

<sup>2</sup> This is stated on the authority of Godwin. *De Præsul. Angl. Brit.*—Bale gives the story a different turn altogether, and reproaches the British prelate for neglect of duty.

<sup>3</sup> Henry's Britain, vol. II. p. 320.

<sup>4</sup> Lives of the Saints, p. 489.



*rædus optimus, cantor peritissimus,*—an excellent harper and most skilful singer.<sup>5</sup>

Our bishop, in one of his treatises on prosody, claims for himself the honour of having been the first to introduce the cultivation of the Latin muse into England. "These things," says he, "have I written concerning the kinds and measures of verse. Whether my great labour shall be found useful or not, I cannot tell; but I am conscious that I have the right to boast as Virgil did:

*Primus ego in patriam mecum, modo vita supersit,  
Aonio rediens deducam vertice Musæm.*

"I first, returning to my native plains,  
Will bring the Aonian choir, if life remains."

The praise here arrogated for himself by the good bishop has been denied to him by Mr Warton, who, in his 'History of Poetry' informs us, on the authority of Consingius, that the first of the Saxons who attempted to write Latin verse was the author of a life of Charlemagne. But that excellent investigator of our literary antiquities appears to have forgotten that Aldhelm died above thirty years before Charlemagne was born. There can be no doubt that Aldhelm's acquirements in classical literature rendered him the wonder of his age. A cotemporary of his own, who lived in a distant province of a Frankish territory, in an epistle to Aldhelm, declares that the fame of his skill in the Latin language had even reached his remote quarter; and Artville, a Scottish prince, is said to have submitted his works to Aldhelm's perusal, accompanied with the request that he would give them a life polish, and rub the Scottish rust off them.<sup>6</sup> Malmesbury thus criticises the style of this early scholar. "He is very simple in his style, and never introduces foreign words when they can be avoided. He is always eloquent; and in his more vivid passages highly rhetorical. When you read him attentively you might suppose him to be a Grecian for his acuteness, a Roman for his elegance, and an Englishman for his pomp of language." There seems to be a little contradiction in the eulogy of the critic; but it must be allowed that Aldhelm's writings are nowise deficient in the great characteristic of all the ecclesiastical writings of the middle ages, rhetorical ornament. His work '*De laudibus virginitatis*' is pronounced by Tanner to be "one tissue of extravagant metaphor,—of inflated, exaggerated, and unprofitable declamation."<sup>7</sup>

Aldhelm died in 709, at Doultin in Somersetshire, whence his body was conveyed to the abbey of Malmesbury, where many miracles were believed to be wrought at his shrine. Malmesbury mentions his having purchased from some French merchant at Dover a copy of the Bible which he himself had often seen; and Bede speaks of Further, who succeeded Aldhelm in the bishopric of Sherborne, as being well-versed in the holy scriptures.

<sup>5</sup> Collect. II. 322.

<sup>6</sup> Leland Apud Tanner, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Hist. of Engl. vol. I. p. 394.

## Venerable Bede.

BORN A. D. 672.—DIED A. D. 735.

THE life of Bede is more closely connected with the literary than with the ecclesiastical history of his country; but, for reasons already stated, we do not hesitate to assign him a place in chronological order in our ecclesiastical series. He was born in the year 672 or 673, in the neighbourhood of Wearmouth, on the estates afterwards belonging to the famous abbeys of St Peter and St Paul, in the bishopric of Durham. This fact we learn from the Saxon paraphrase of his Ecclesiastical History; and it completely refutes the assertions of Hector Boece and others, who would make him a native of Italy, or some other part of Europe, though it is an ascertained truth that he never travelled out of England, and scarcely beyond the bounds of his native place.

At the age of seven he was brought to the monastery of St Peter, and committed to the care of Abbot Benedict, under whom and his successor Ceolfrid, he was most carefully educated for twelve years; and this service he amply repaid by writing the lives of both, which have been preserved to modern times. St Paul's, where he also resided, was situated at a place called Iarrow, near the river Tyne, about four miles from Newcastle; and when this abbey, as well as that of St Peter, were ruined by the Danes, and became cells to Durham, inhabited by only two or three black monks, they still carefully preserved the cell in which Bede dwelt, and were wont to show strangers his oratory, and a little altar which appeared to have been once covered by a kind of serpentine or green marble. At the age of nineteen he was ordained deacon; and from that time he taught and studied with incredible diligence, dividing his whole time between books and devotion, admired of all who knew him, and considered by the monks as their pattern.<sup>1</sup> The praises of his contemporaries nothing abated his application, or his modesty, which was no less conspicuous than his learning.

In his thirtieth year he was ordained priest, at the express command of his abbot Ceolfrid, by John of Beverly, then bishop of Hexham, a person of exemplary piety, and of eminent repute as a scholar. He had been formerly preceptor to Bede, and always maintained a great affection for his pupil, keeping up a very close correspondence with him. This mutual esteem continued after John became bishop of York, and it was probably from him that Bede took his opinions in reference to the strict discipline, subordination, and fervent zeal of the monastic state. In these points he closely and constantly adhered to the instructions of his master; and Alcuin, who was his contemporary, in a letter to the monks of Wearmouth and Iarrow, congratulates them on the studious, devout, and submissive life adopted by Bede, as a model for the rest of the order. So attached was he to the rules of his house in point of humility and obedience, that he never desired to change his condition, or even affected the honours to which he might have attained; and, in regard to his superiors, he uniformly submitted to their commands, and did what they esteemed fittest for the service of the community to which he belonged.

<sup>1</sup> Bale de Script. Brit. p. 94.—Alcuin apud Leland.

His extensive and various erudition, and his extraordinary abilities, soon rendered him so remarkable, that his fame passed the limits of this island, and became generally known throughout the continent, and more particularly at Rome, from whence Pope Sergius I. wrote, in very pressing terms, to his abbot Ceolfrid, that Bede might be sent to Rome, where he wished to consult him upon many important subjects. This fact is the highest eulogium that could be paid to the talents and genius of this celebrated monk. It is mentioned by William of Malmesbury, a careful and judicious author, who gives us also a part of the pope's letter to the abbot, promising Bede a safe return; and stating as his reason for sending for him, that he wanted his advice in affairs relating to the government of the universal church.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding this honourable invitation, it is certain that Bede never undertook the journey in question, though in those days it was far from being uncommon. The cause of his refusal is not well-ascertained. Perhaps the design was laid aside by the death of the pope, which happened in September, 701. Perhaps his modesty and love of retirement, his assiduous application to his studies, and his warm attachment to his country, were the chief motives that induced him to decline; and the great use his labours were of to his brethren, and to all the clergy in the Northumbrian kingdom, could not fail to procure him interest sufficient to excuse him to his holiness. At all events, the venerable historian pursued his literary labours without interruption either in his own monastery, or at Cambridge, as some authors report. His residence at the latter place is one of those obscure points not established by direct evidence. Fuller and Bale speak in the affirmative, and Dr Allcock, bishop of Ely, directed the prayers of the church for the soul of Bede, as having been of that university; and it is farther certain that there was formerly a small low house near St John's college there, that went by the name of Bede's lodgings. These and others are merely presumptive arguments; and they are treated with very great contempt by those who advocate the antiquity of Oxford, though the proofs which they adduce to the contrary are equally trivial.<sup>3</sup> There is no conclusive evidence either way; and perhaps the first step in deciding the controversy would be to ascertain whether the university of Cambridge existed at the time. By remaining thus in his native country, and prosecuting the toils of a monastic life, Bede gained time to make himself master of almost every branch of literature that the circumstances of his age would permit; and this he did, not with any view to fame or preferment, but merely for the sake of becoming useful to society, and advancing the progress of religion. It was from these generous and patriotic motives that he undertook to compile his 'Ecclesiastical History,' in making collections for which, he spent several years. It was on the same principle that, we find, this national work—so highly commended in succeeding times, and even in the present day, in which there is so great a difference of manners and customs—to be of great use and authority, and that, too, in the estimation of those who justly condemn the superstitious legends that are inserted in it. It appeared when the author was in his fifty-ninth year; and we know that soon after he began to fall into that declining state of health, from which he never recovered, and to which men of sedentary lives often fall martyrs.

<sup>2</sup> Lib. i. cap. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Biog. Brit. ii. 117.



William of Malmesbury has preserved a very minute account of his sickness and the manner of his death; and this, it plainly appears, he took from a treatise that was written expressly upon that subject by Cuthbert, one of Bede's disciples, who attended him to the last. From this we learn that towards the final stage of this malady he was afflicted with an asthma, which he supported with great firmness of mind, though in much weakness and pain, for six weeks together. In all this time he did not the least abate of his usual employments in the monastery: but continued to pray, to instruct the young monks, and to prosecute his literary works, that, if possible, he might finish them before he died. In all the nights of his illness, in which, from the nature of his disease, he could get but little sleep, he sung hymns and praises to God; and, though he expressed the utmost confidence in his mercy, and was able, on a review of his own conduct, to declare seriously, "that he had so lived as not to be ashamed to die," yet he did not deny his apprehensions of death, and that mysterious dread so natural to man on the approach of his dissolution. Two works in particular occupied his time and attention,—one a translation of the gospel of St John into the Saxon language, for the benefit of the church,—the second was some passages which he was extracting from the works of St Isidore. The day before he expired he grew much worse, and his feet began to swell; yet he spent the night as usual, and continued dictating to the person who wrote for him, who, on observing his weakness, said to him, "There remains now only one chapter, but it seems very irksome for you to speak;" to which he replied, "It is easy; take another pen, and write as quickly as you can." After dividing among his brethren, in the morning, some incense and other things of little value which were in his chest, he resumed his labours. "There is now," said Wilberch, his amanuensis, "but one sentence;" and in a few minutes the young man observed, "It is now done." "Well, thou hast said the truth; it is now done! Take my head between your hands and lift me, that I may sit over against the place where I was wont to pray; and where, again sitting, I may yet invoke my Father." Being seated according to his desire, on the floor of his cell, he immediately breathed his last, pronouncing the usual doxology of the church. The monk who wrote this account, says positively, that his death happened on Thursday, May the 26th, being the feast of Christ's ascension, which would fix it to the year 735.<sup>4</sup> The best writers adopt this chronology, but there are different opinions about the time of this event, which has given rise to fierce controversies, authors differing in their reckoning no less than thirty-seven years, that is, from 729 to 766; the first being evidently wrong, as his history, which was not then finished, clearly shows; and the last is very improbable, as it makes him live to the unusual age of one hundred and five.<sup>5</sup> Such discrepancies are not surprising considering the remoteness of the subject; but the point is well enough established to supersede the necessity of farther dispute. The body was interred in the church of his own monastery at Iarrow; and the aisle where he was buried was much revered on that account, numbers of people resorting thither to pray, more especially on the anniversary of his death. But in process of

<sup>4</sup> Simeon Dunelm. Lib. iii. cap. 7.—Malm. Lib. i. cap. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Biog. Brit. ii. 120.

time it was removed to Durham, and placed in the same coffin with that of St Cuthbert, and is celebrated by ancient poets and historians as among the relics preserved in that cathedral. In that legendary age it has justly been observed, to the credit of Bede, that the monks never forged any miracles of his, or pretended that he wrought any in his lifetime; but to give some colour for removing his bones to Durham, they pretended that one Gamelus, a very prudent and pious monk, was admonished by St Cuthbert in a dream, to travel through Northumberland and collect the relics of holy men, in order that they might be the better protected from sacrilegious hands, and employed in stirring up the piety of the faithful in the diocese of Durham,—an ingenious device of the monks, who, in this way, succeeded in augmenting the reputation and the reverence of their church beyond that of any other in the north of England.

Abundance of epitaphs were written upon him; but none that were at all equal to his merits, or capable of doing justice to his memory. Poetry must have been in a miserably low condition at the time when this great historian flourished, as may be seen in the collections formed by the learned and laborious Leland. We find one in Malmesbury, which he censures as quite unworthy to be placed on the tomb of so excellent a man. The Latin is at least better than Dr Hakewill's translation, which will convince the reader that poetry was still in a rude state long after the age of Bede:—

Presbyter hic Beda requiescit, carne sepultus.  
Dona, Christe, animam in cœlis gaudere per ævum!  
Daque illi sophiæ debriari fonte cui tam  
Suspiravit orans intento semper amore.<sup>6</sup>

“ Presbyter Bede's corse lies buried in this grave;  
Grant, Christ, his soul in heaven eternal joys may have.  
Give him to be drunk of the well of wisdom, to  
Which with such joy and love he strived and breathed so.”<sup>7</sup>

But how poor soever these epitaphs may be as specimens of composition, they serve at least to show the good intention of their authors, and in how great repute for learning and sanctity Bede has continued from his own to the present times. The advantages he had enjoyed of having able masters in his youth, and his own indefatigable application during forty-three years, will account for his amazing progress in science, and for the vast number of treatises which he wrote. It is very certain that his great learning and unaffected piety gained him, even among his contemporaries, a very general esteem, insomuch that, if we may believe some authors, his homilies were read publicly in the churches during his lifetime,—a circumstance to which, according to Fuller, he owed the former surname by which he is so well-known; for this being a new and singular honour, there arose some difficulty about the title that should be given him in the preface to those lectures; and, as it was thought too much to style him Saint while yet alive, the title of Venerable was fixed upon as more appropriate, or at least less liable to objection.<sup>8</sup> This account, however, has been called in question, as unsupported by authority, since none of his contemporaries call him Venerable, and his epitaph, already quoted, shows that, before his

<sup>6</sup> Leland. Collect. vol. ii. p. 118.      <sup>7</sup> Apology for the Providence of God, p. 254.

<sup>8</sup> Gabriel. Buccellin. Men. Bened.

death, he had no other title than Presbyter. The monks have invented a fabulous explanation of the manner in which he acquired this surname. When he was grown old and blind, they tell us, one of his young disciples carried him to a place where there lay some heaps of stones, and told him he was surrounded by a great crowd of people who waited with much silence and attention to receive his spiritual consolation. The good old man, accordingly, made a long discourse; and, when he had concluded with prayer, the stones very punctually made their response,—‘Amen, Venerable Bede!’ Another legend, equally ridiculous, informs us that a monk, who had no great facility in verse-making, had proceeded so far in an epitaph, but being in want of a word to complete the leonine or rhythm of the verse, and after tormenting his brain to no purpose, he fell fast asleep. On awakening he discovered, to his infinite astonishment, that the blank was filled up and the line completed by some miraculous hand, as follows:—

Hac jacent in fossa Bedæ (venerabilis) ossa.

Here, in this narrow grave, are laid  
The bones of Venerable Bede.

These idle fictions deserve no credit; all we know with certainty is, that the custom of applying that epithet to our historian is very ancient; and all writers agree that he justly merited the appellation, as well for his genuine piety as for his singular modesty. His literary labours were so well received in his own time, and for many ages after, that we find a high character bestowed on them by the most eminent authors, as well as the most competent judges. Malmesbury, Simeon of Durham, Bale, Pits, Fuller, Holinshed, Stowe, Speed, and many others, have spoken of him as an honour to the age and country in which he lived. The Germans regarded him as the most learned man in the western world; and it has been remarked by Simeon of Durham, that there is nothing more surprising, than that a man who lived in one of the most remote corners of the world, and never had an opportunity of travelling for his improvement in science or frequenting the schools of philosophy, should have distinguished himself by so uncommon an extent of erudition, and the composition of so many books. His studies embraced what was then deemed a complete knowledge of rhetoric, metaphysics, natural philosophy, astronomy, arithmetic, geometry, cosmography, chronology, history, mathematics, poetry, music, philosophy, divinity, and the whole circle of the liberal arts. Bale assures us that he was so well skilled in the writings of Pagan authors, that he had scarcely an equal in that age; and had so solid a knowledge of the mysteries and principles of the Christian faith, considering the darkness and corruptions of the times in which he lived, that by many persons he was esteemed superior even to Gregory the Great in a critical and accurate acquaintance with the Greek and Latin, which were then the languages of the church. From the memoirs of Bede's own life, at the end of his ecclesiastical history, it appears that he was very assiduous in acquiring a knowledge of music, and punctual in performing choral duty in the service of his monastery. It is evident from the titles of some of his treatises that he wrote both upon the theory and practice of that science; and Sir John Hawkins observes, that a few scattered hints which occur in the works of St Augustine and Bede, suggested the



formation of a system of metrical laws, such as might enable music not only to subsist of itself, but aid the power of melody with that force and energy which it is known to derive from the regular mixture and interchange of long and short quantities. His varied attainments are attested by his numerous works, some of which were deemed, even while he was living, of so great authority, that a council held in England and approved by the Catholic church, ordered that they should be publicly read in the churches. They tended exceedingly to polish and civilize the rude manners of his country, and they served as a kind of encyclopedia for the instruction of youth, long after his decease. Bede, however, had detractors as well as admirers; and some authors both English and foreign, especially the French, have taken great liberties with his character, representing him as a man of superficial learning, of vast but undigested reading, of little judgment though great industry, negligent in point of style, and void of all taste for criticism. By some he is charged with being extremely credulous, and recording as truths the miracles and fabulous legends of the monks. Among this number are the famous Milton, and the historian, Dupin. But the faults of which they accuse Bede, are imperfections to which the first histories of every country must always be liable, and from which, consequently, there was no reason to expect that his should be exempt. The errors they condemn were those of the age rather than of the individual. However inelegant to modern taste, Bede's style will bear a comparison with that of any contemporary writer. Milton objected that our author had taken so little notice of civil affairs; this no doubt is a misfortune; but the poet of *Paradise* should have recollected that it was ecclesiastical history purely which Bede undertook to write. Yet Milton himself acknowledges that he is the best guide to an acquaintance with the political transactions of the times, that history and all notice of public measures were in a manner buried with him. It should besides be recollected, that in Bede's days the sacred greatly preponderated over the secular interests. The building of a church, the preferment of an abbot, the canonization of a martyr, the miracles of a saint, or the importation into England of the hair and nails of an apostle, were necessarily reckoned matters of far higher importance than victories or revolutions. It is amusing to see the French critics censuring Bede for credulity; they might quite as well have accused him of superstition. Wonders and visions were the staple commodity of the literature of the eighth century; and perhaps better fitted than reason or argument to impress the minds of a rude illiterate people. It is but justice, however, to our venerable historian, to add, that if he has had enemies and censurers among modern writers, there have not been wanting men of equal abilities and greater reputation who have vindicated his character and writings, and supported his right to that fame which he has so long enjoyed. It may be sufficient to mention the names of Cambden, Selden, Spelman, Stillingfleet, Mabillon, Henry, Warton, &c. whose verdict will maintain the great reputation of Bede unsullied and undiminished.

His writings have gone through various editions, and been embodied in different collections. The first catalogue of his works we have from himself, at the end of his history, which contains all he had written before the year 731. Leland mentions some other piece of his he had

met with, as well as several that in his opinion were spurious. Bale mentions ninety-six treatises written by Bede, and afterwards swells them to a hundred and forty-five, exclusive of various pieces which he had not seen. Pits enlarges the preceding lists, and mentions the libraries where many of these tracts were to be found. The first collection of Bede's printed works appeared at Paris in 1544, in three volumes folio; though several pieces had appeared earlier. They were frequently republished with a clear and distinct account of their contents. But the most exact and satisfactory detail of Bede's life and writings we owe to the Benedictine John Mabillon. His works embrace a vast diversity of topics, in almost every science. A few of the titles may serve as a specimen:—Of the Six Ages of the World; Of Proverbs; Of the Substance of the Elements; Of the Keeping of Easter; Of the Foretelling Life and Death; Of Noah's Ark; Of the Languages of Nations; Lives of the Saints, Cuthbert, Felix, &c.; A Martyrology; A Poem on the Martyrdom of Justin; Of the Situation of Jerusalem and the Holy Places; Of the Hexameron, or Creation in Six Days; Of the Tabernacle; Of Solomon's Temple; Questions on the Pentateuch, &c. and Four Books of Kings; Commentaries on Boece upon the Trinity; Sparks, or Common Places; Memorable Passages and Collections; A Discourse of the Strong Woman (an allegory); Of Morals, one book; Meditations on the Passion of Christ, for the Seven Canonical Hours of the Day; The Axioms of Aristotle Explained; &c. &c. Besides these, there are an infinite number of small tracts on arithmetic, grammar, rhetoric, astronomy, chronology, meteors, &c.; and commentaries on almost every book in Scripture, from Genesis to the Revelations.<sup>9</sup> The hymns of Bede were published with notes by Cassander, but many of them are of doubtful authority. His 'Acts of St Cuthbert' is a poem in heroic verse. In the list of his unpublished works, besides homilies, commentaries, and other religious tracts, we find among others, Of the Situation and Wonders of Britain; the Lives of St Julian; St Gregory the Great; St Augustine, the apostle of the English, &c.: Of the Image of the World; Of the Day of Judgment. In his account of the monastery of St Paul and St Peter, where he was educated, he mentions that masons and artists for erecting these edifices were brought over from France; and that these people not only furnished whatever was necessary for the building, but also instructed the English in the art of glass-making, which was till then unknown in this island. His letter to Egbert, bishop of York, who consulted him in all momentous affairs, and between whom there subsisted the strictest friendship, is very far from being the least considerable of his works, as it shows us not only the character and temper of the men, but gives such a picture of the then state of the church as is no where else to be met with. It is perhaps the last of his writings, and contains his advice as to the erection of new sees, as well as in reference to the inconveniences and abuses which sprung from the prevailing humour of multiplying religious houses, which the nobles frequently appropriated to themselves, greatly to the prejudice both of church and state. The most famous, however, of Bede's works, is his

<sup>9</sup> The curious reader will find a very carefully drawn up catalogue of Bede's writings, as contained in the Cologne folio edition of his works, in the 4th vol. of Henry's History of Britain.

'Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, in Five Books,' written in Latin, in which he gives an account of the early state of the church in this island. He treats indeed most largely of the conversion of Northumberland, and the progress of religion in that kingdom; but he intermixes it with such other information as he could derive from books, or the testimony of living witnesses; and for this purpose he kept correspondence with the other states of the heptarchy. There was a paraphrase of it made into the Saxon tongue, which some have ascribed to the pen of King Alfred. It was translated into English by Dr Thomas Stapleton, of the university of Louvain; though his partiality to his own church has led him to deal not always fairly and honestly with his author. The design of the translator, who dedicates his book to Queen Elizabeth, was to support the Popish religion; and this temptation proved too strong for his fidelity. The oldest edition of Bede's history was published at Heidelberg, in 1587; but it has often been republished; that of Wheloc appeared at Cambridge, in 1644; and another by Dr Smith, in 1722. All our historians have found it a mine of useful intelligence, affording a better body of civil as well as church history, illustrative of the laws, customs, and antiquities of the Saxons, than is extant in our language.

## Boniface.

BORN A. D. 680.—DIED A. D. 755.

BONIFACE, first archbishop of Mentz, and usually styled the Apostle of Germany, being the first who preached Christianity in that country, was a native of Britain, but whether of Scots or English extraction has not been very clearly ascertained.<sup>1</sup> The most generally received opinion is, that he was of English descent, and born at Crediton, or Kirton, in Devonshire, about the year 680; and that his original name was Wilfrid or Winfrid. He received his education in several English monasteries, and at the age of thirty was consecrated a priest, and became a zealous preacher. His acquirements, extensive for the age in which he lived, had obtained for him the reputation of high scholarship, but his active mind now turned itself to other employments, and he resolved to dedicate himself to the propagation of the gospel among the heathen nations of Europe. Several British missionaries had preceded him in this beneficent work. Gallus had gone to Allemania in 614; Emmeran, who died in 652, to Bavaria; Kilian, who died in 689, to Franconia; Willibrord and Swidvert, to Friesland; and Sigfrid to Sweden. Emulous of their example, Wilfrid, accompanied by two other monks, set out for Friesland in 716; but a war which broke out at this period between Charles Martel of France, and Radbod king of Friesland, rendered his design impracticable. He therefore returned to England, where he was soon afterwards offered the dignity of abbot of Nutecll, which he declined, being still zealously bent on personally undertaking a mission to some pagan country. Filled with this single idea, he set out for Rome, and presented himself to Pope Gregory II. with recommendatory

<sup>1</sup> Cave Hist. Lit. p. 480.—Mackenzie's Scotch Writers, p. 35.



letters from the bishop of Winchester. Gregory entered warmly into his views, and gave him his papal commission to preach the gospel to all the nations inhabiting the eastern parts of Germany. He commenced his labours in Thuringia and Bavaria, spent three years in Friesland, and journeyed through Hesse, as far as the confines of Saxony, baptizing everywhere, and converting the pagan temples in every district through which he passed into Christian churches.

In 723, he was invited to Rome, and consecrated bishop of the new German churches by the name of Boniface. On this occasion Pope Gregory exacted from the new bishop an oath of subjection to the papal authority, couched in very strong terms. Boniface then returned to his mission, and, under the patronage of Charles Martel, pursued his labours with great success. It does not appear to what extent our missionary availed himself of the assistance of the secular arm in his work of evangelization. It is to be hoped that he acted in the spirit of the directions transmitted to him by Daniel, bishop of Winchester, about the year 723. The document is a curious one, and as affording a striking example of good sense and liberality, in an age little remarkable for either, we shall here quote a few sentences from it. "Do not contradict in a direct manner their accounts of the genealogies of their gods; allow that they were born from one another in the same way that mankind are; this concession will give you the advantage of proving that there was a time when they had no existence. Ask them, who governed the world before the birth of their gods? and if their gods have ceased to propagate? If they have not, show them the consequence, namely, that the gods must be infinite in number, and that no man can rationally be at ease in worshipping any of them, for fear lest he should, in doing so, be provoking the hostility of some more powerful deity. Argue thus with them, not in the way of insult, but with temper and moderation; and embrace any favourable opportunity to contrast the absurdities of their belief with the doctrines of Christ. Let the pagans be ashamed rather than incensed by your indirect mode of stating these arguments. Show them the insufficiency of their plea of antiquity. Inform them that idolatry did anciently prevail throughout the world, but that Jesus Christ was manifested in order to reconcile men to God by his grace." If the missionary acted up to the spirit of these instructions—and there is little reason to think otherwise—he must have been well worthy of the high office to which he devoted himself, but his conduct must have contrasted powerfully with that of some of his brethren in their intercourse with the heathen. The fame of his success reached his native land, and induced many of his countrymen to join themselves to his mission, by which means Christianity was extensively preached in Hesse, Thuringia, and other parts of Germany.

In the year 732, Boniface received the title of archbishop from Gregory III. who entered into his views with the same alacrity that his predecessor had exhibited. He now began to erect churches where needed, and succeeded in obtaining a fresh accession of fellow-labourers from England. In 738, he again visited Rome, and afterwards, returning into Bavaria, he established the bishoprics of Freisingen, Ratisbon, Erfurt, Barabourg—afterwards transferred to Paderborn—Wurtzburg and Aichstadt, the only previously existing bishopric having been that of Passau. In 739, he restored the episcopal see of St Rupert at Salzburg.

After the death of Charles Martel of France, he was employed to consecrate Pepin the Short at Soissons, who acknowledged his service by appointing him bishop of Mentz, which has retained the primacy among the German churches ever since. He also founded a monastery at Fridislar, another at Hamenburg, and one at Ordofo, in all of which the monks supported themselves by their own industry. In 746, he laid the foundation of the great abbey of Fulda, which soon became the most eminent seminary of learning in Germany. He also, as pope's legate, held eight ecclesiastical councils during his primacy, besides maintaining a most extensive correspondence, particularly with his native country. An intimate friendship had long subsisted between Cuthbert, bishop of Hereford, and Boniface. On the advancement of the former to the archbishopric of Canterbury, Boniface addressed to him a long and affectionate epistle, in which, after warmly exhorting his friend to the faithful discharge of the duties of his high office, he points out several things in the state of the English church which appeared to him to demand reformation: particularly the gay dress and intemperate habits of the clergy, and the loose habits acquired by English nuns in the performance of pilgrimages to Rome after the fashion of the day. The suggestions contained in this letter proved the occasion of calling together the synod of Cloveshoo, whose proceedings we have noticed elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

Boniface terminated his laborious and useful life at Dockum in West Friesland, A. D. 755, in the 75th year of his age. Assisted by Eoban, whom he had lately ordained bishop of Utrecht, he had appointed a day on which to confirm those whom he had previously baptized; but on the morning appointed for the ceremony his company was attacked and massacred to a man by a body of pagans. He met his death with calm intrepidity, forbidding his servants to offer any resistance to their assailants, and exhorting them to commit their souls in peace to their Creator. His body was interred in the abbey of Fulda, where a copy of the Gospels said to be in his own hand-writing, is still preserved. His character has been greatly aspersed by Mosheim and his commentators, but as warmly and more successfully defended by Milner.<sup>3</sup> His works were collected and published by Serarius in 1605;<sup>4</sup> but the most complete collection of his letters were published at Mentz in 1789, in folio. Willibald, the nephew, and some time the fellow-labourer of Boniface, was a man of learning, and wrote the life of his uncle.

## Alcuin.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 720.—DIED A. D. 804.

ALCUIN was born in Yorkshire, or, as others say, not far from London. The masters of his education were first, the Venerable Bede, —though the pupil must then have been young and the master old, as Bede died in 735—and afterwards Egbert, archbishop of York, who made him keeper of the curious library which he had founded in that city.<sup>1</sup> About the year 780 he was made deacon of the church of York, and at

<sup>2</sup> P. 126.

<sup>3</sup> Church Hist. vol. iii. p. 89.

<sup>4</sup> Du Pin Eccles. Hist. Cant. viii.

<sup>1</sup> Epist. Alcuini, apud Lectiones Antiq. Canisii, tom. ii. p. 409.

length abbot of the monastery of Canterbury. In 793 he was invited over to France by Charlemagne to assist him in opposing the heresy of Felix, bishop of Urgel, in Catalonia, and the canons of the false synod of Nice. In the controversy that agitated the western church towards the end of the eighth century, about the mystery of the incarnation, Felix maintained that Jesus Christ ought only to be called the adoptive son of God. This opinion he defended in his writings, and propagated it not only in Spain, but in France and Germany. In 792 he was condemned by a council of bishops held at Ratisbon, who sent him to Pope Adrian at Rome. The pope confirmed the judgment of the synod, and obliged Felix to retract; but he again lapsed into his former error, and was again condemned by the council of Frankfort consisting of three hundred prelates. Other Spanish bishops were tainted with the heresy, and Charlemagne joined his authority with that of the council to compel them to renounce their opinions. In 799, he sent for Felix to Aix la Chapelle, that he might have an opportunity publicly to defend himself in presence of the bishops. Alcuin was appointed to reply to his arguments, and refuted him; upon which he recanted and embraced the doctrine of the church, that Jesus Christ as man, ought to be called the proper and not the adoptive son of God.<sup>2</sup> Charlemagne had a high esteem for the learning of Alcuin, and not only honoured him with his friendship and confidence, but became his pupil, and received instructions from him in rhetoric, logic, mathematics, and divinity.<sup>3</sup> He gave him the abbeys of Ferrara, St Jodocus, and St Lupus; and afterwards that of St Martin at Tours, to which he retired, having obtained permission of the emperor, on account of his age and infirmities. There he spent the remainder of his life in an honourable retreat, and employed himself in educating the youth in the school which he had founded in that city. The emperor endeavoured to recall him to court, and wrote him many urgent letters, but in vain. He died at Tours in the year 804, with the reputation of a pious and learned man; and, according to William of Malmesbury, the best English divine after Bede and Aldhelm. He was not only a distinguished scholar himself, but a great promoter of science. France, says Cave in his *Literary History*,<sup>4</sup> is obliged to Alcuin for all the polite learning she boasted of in that and the following ages. The universities of Paris, Tours, Fulden, Soisson, and many others, owe to him their origin and increase; those of whom he was not the superior or founder, being at least enlightened by his instructions and example, and enriched by the royal grants which he procured for them. His services in the cause of literature have been recorded in the verses of a German poet cited by Camden:—

“ No smaller tokens of esteem from France  
Alcuinus claims, who durst himself advance  
Single against whole troops of ignorance;  
'Twas he transported Britain's richest ware—  
Language and arts, and kindly taught them there!”

Alcuin was a very voluminous author. Most of his works are extant; and, in 1617, an edition of them was published by Du Chesne at Paris, though a number of smaller pieces have since appeared, and may

<sup>1</sup> Dupin, *Hist. Eccles. cent. viii.*

<sup>2</sup> Malm. lib. i. cap. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Sect. viii. p. 496.



be met with in Dupin's Ecclesiastical History. His Latinity is pure and elegant, and his erudition vast considering the period in which he lived. To the Greek and Latin he is said to have joined an acquaintance with the Hebrew tongue, which would seem to have formed a part of scholastic study sooner than is generally imagined. In his scientific writings he sometimes ventured to break through the pedantic formalities of established systems. Two of his treatises he has thrown into a dialogue between himself and his illustrious pupil Charlemagne. Sir John Hawkins has remarked, that he was particularly well-versed in music, as appears by his tract on the use of the Psalms, and by his preface to Cassiodorus on the 'Seven Disciplines.'<sup>5</sup> He also wrote an Essay on Music, which is lost. The formidable catalogue of Alcuin's numerous works, comprehend homilies, lives of saints, commentaries on various parts of scripture, letters, poems, and books on the different sciences. His theological writings include a Discourse on the Words in Genesis, "Let us make man after our own image,"—An Epistle on Solomon's Threescore Queens,—Questions concerning the Trinity,—Seven Books on the Incarnation against Bishop Felix, and Four Books concerning Images,—Commentaries on the Proverbs, Canticles, and Epistles of St Paul. The saints whose lives he has written are, St Martin of Tours, St Vedast of Arras, St Willibrord of Utrecht, and St Riguier the Priest. His poems consist of Hymns and Epigrams,—Stanzas on a Cuckoo,—and a heroic poem on the Bishops and Saints of the Church of York, containing 1700 verses; though some are of opinion that this last, from its barbarous style, was not written by Alcuin, but by a Benedictine monk of the following century. The varied and prolific talents of those dark ages must not seduce us into too magnificent ideas of the depth or solidity of their attainments. Their merits, as Wharton has observed, were in a great measure relative. Their circle of reading was contracted, their systems of philosophy jejune; and the lectures of the schools served rather to stop the growth of ignorance, than to produce any positive or important improvements in knowledge. They aspired to no higher acquisitions than the prescribed curriculum or course of study; for the art of making excursions from the narrow path of scientific instruction into the spacious and fertile regions of liberal and original thinking was then unknown.

### Asser.

DIED A. D. 910.

ASSER, or Aysserius, was a learned monk of St David's, and a writer of considerable celebrity, though some points in his personal history are involved in uncertainty. He was of British extraction, probably a native of Pembrokeshire, and educated in the monastery of St David's, in Latin called Menevia, and hence his surname of Menevensis. His tutor or instructor is said to have been Johannes Patricius, one of the most renowned scholars of his age.<sup>1</sup> Here also he was on terms of intimacy with the archbishop of that see, who was his relation. This

<sup>5</sup> Hist. of Music, vol. i. p. 379.

<sup>1</sup> Bale.

has given rise to a mistake which has converted Asser into two other individuals of the same name,—an archbishop of St David's, and a reader in the university of Oxford. Bale, Godwin, Cave, and Hearne, affirm that our monk was secretary or chancellor to this archbishop, but erroneously, as there is every probability that the different persons alluded to were one and the same.<sup>2</sup> Besides, he tells us himself that the name of his relation was an Archbishop Novis, though it does not appear that he was either his secretary or chancellor. Novis held that honour from 841 to 873, when he died.

From St David's Asser was invited to the court of Alfred the Great, merely from the great reputation of his learning. On his journey he met with that prince at the town of Dean, in Wiltshire, who received him with great civility, and even evinced for him the strongest marks of favour and affection, insomuch that he recommended him not to think of returning or residing at St David's, but rather continue with him as domestic chaplain, and assist him in his studies.<sup>3</sup> Asser hesitated to accept this flattering proposal, and seemed to prefer the place where he had been educated and received the order of priesthood, to the honourable promotion offered him by the king. Alfred then expressed his desire that he would at least divide his time equally between the court and the monastery, and devote six months of the year to his society. To this request Asser replied by soliciting permission to consult his brethren, which was readily granted; but unfortunately in his journey to St David's he fell sick at Winchester of a fever, which confined him upwards of twelve months, much to the regret and disappointment of Alfred. On his recovery he repaired to St David's, and having taken the advice of his brethren on the king's offer, they unanimously agreed that he should accept it, only requesting that his change of residence should be quarterly instead of half-yearly. In this resolution private interest had some weight, for the monastery and parish of St David's had often been plundered, and their archbishops sometimes expelled by Hemeid, a petty prince of South Wales. From the favour and friendship of one of their members with Alfred, the pious monks hoped to derive great advantages in the repression of those violent inroads to which they were exposed. When Asser returned he found the king at Leoneforde, who received him with great kindness and civility. His first visit continued for eight months, during which time he read and explained to the prince whatever books were in his library. Their mutual esteem increased with their acquaintance; and on the Christmas-eve following, Asser received a gift of the monasteries of Ambrosbury in Wiltshire, and Banwell in Somerset, with a silk pall of great value. The royal bounty was accompanied with the generous compliment that "these were but small things, and by way of earnest of better that should follow them."<sup>4</sup> The promise was soon fulfilled, for the bishopric of Exeter, and, not long after, that of Sherborne was bestowed on him. The latter of these preferments he seems to have relinquished in 883, a circumstance which has misled Matthew of Westminster, and other writers, to place his death in that year. He was succeeded in the see of Sherborne by Sighelm, who was employed by Alfred to carry his alms to the Christians of St Thomas in India; but the Saxon Chronicle clearly proves that Asser

<sup>2</sup> Biog. Brit. I. 408.

<sup>3</sup> Asser. Menev. Ed. Oxon. 1722. p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Asser. Menev. Ed. Oxon. 1722. p. 50.

survived his quitting that bishopric for seven and twenty years, though he always retained the title,—a fact which will account for the supposition of his decease at the time when his successor was appointed. From this period he was a constant attendant at court, and is named by Alfred in his testament—which must have been written some time before the year 885—as a person in whom he had particular confidence. He is also mentioned by the king in the prefatory epistle prefixed to his translation of Gregory's 'Pastoral,' addressed to Wulfig bishop of London, wherein he acknowledged the assistance he had received from him and others in that undertaking. The method used by Alfred in translating, we learn both from himself and his instructor, was to give the sense and substance of his author rather than the exact words.

It seems to have been the near resemblance of their genius which gained Asser so great a share in the royal confidence, and which very probably was the occasion of his drawing up those memoirs of the life of Alfred, dedicated and presented by him to the king, and which are still extant. In this work there is a very curious and minute account of the manner in which that prince and our author spent their time together. Asser tells an anecdote, that being at the feast of St Martin, and having quoted accidentally in conversation a passage from some famous writer, the king was so highly pleased with it, that he wished him to note it down on the margin of a book which he usually carried in his breast. Finding there was no room in the book to record the favourite passage, he asked the king, whether he should not provide a few leaves in which to set down such remarkable things as occurred either in reading or conversation. Alfred, who was indefatigable in the acquirement of knowledge, was extremely delighted with the idea, and directed Asser to put it in immediate execution. From this hint sprung the 'Enchiridion of Golden Sayings,' for by constant additions their collection began to accumulate, till at length it reached the size of an ordinary psalter; and this compilation is what Asser calls the Enchiridion, and Alfred his 'Hand-Book' or 'Manual.' In all probability this learned monk continued at court during the whole reign of Alfred, and perhaps for several years after; but when or where he died has been the subject of some controversy. The Saxon chronicle positively fixes his death to the year 910, and to this statement it does not appear that any just objection can be made.

We have already mentioned the confusion of certain authors with regard to the personal identity of Asser. To expose their mistakes by argument or history would be a tiresome and needless labour. It is sufficient merely to observe, that Asser the monk, and Asser the bishop of Sherborne, are proved on the authority of Matthew of Westminster, and Florence of Worcester, to be the same person; and that he was afterwards archbishop of St David's, appears from the annals of that monastery, as well as from the list of Giraldus Cambrensis, who sets him down after Etwal the successor of Novis. The Saxon chronicles, moreover, never mention two Assers, though they speak copiously of one. On the whole, therefore, we may conclude, that our author was the individual who composed the Annals of Alfred, though the story of his teaching at Oxford is either unfounded or applied to a different person. And in regard to his several promotions, it would appear that from being a monk of St David's he became parish-priest, afterwards



abbot of Ambresbury and Banwell, then bishop of Sherborne, which he held for a very short time; next archbishop of St David's, probably in the year 883; and lastly, primate of Wales in 909, through the kindness of Edward the Elder, the son and successor of Alfred. There is no less controversy about the works of Asser than about his life and preferences, for some allege that he never wrote any thing except the annals of king Alfred; whereas Pits gives the titles of five other books, and adds that he wrote many more.<sup>5</sup> Of these one is a Commentary on Boece, which is mentioned by Leland. The '*Annales Britannicæ*' has been published by Dr Gale, though it bears internal evidence of not being the work of Asser; his '*Golden Sentences*' are a monument of his learning and industry; a book of Homilies, and another of Epistles, are also ascribed to him, though the authenticity of these two volumes can only be presumptive, as no ancient author says a word about them. The statement of Bishop Godwin, that Asser was buried in the cathedral church of Sherborne,<sup>6</sup> rests on no other foundation than his holding that see,—a mode of argument which would apply with equal truth and more force of reasoning to St David's, as the place of his sepulture. On one point there is no disagreement:—that this excellent man was one of the most pious, learned, and modest prelates of the age in which he lived.

## Dunstan.

BORN A. D. 925.—DIED A. D. 988.

DUNSTAN, a famous saint in the Romish calendar, and archbishop of Canterbury, was born of noble parents, whose names were Heorstan and Cynethryth, near Glastonbury in Somersetshire, in the year 925. He was a character formed by nature to act a distinguished part in the drama of life, and his progress affords instances of great talents perverted by an injudicious education and inordinate ambition. It is alleged that, in the old British church at Glastonbury, which he frequently visited, he had a vision of his future greatness; and that a venerable phantom pointed out the place where he was to build a superb monastery. His parents encouraged his taste for books; and his superior abilities enabled him to excel his companions, and to run with easy rapidity through the course of his studies. A fever interrupted his advancement, and, in a fit of temporary frenzy, he leaped from his bed, eluded his nurse, and seizing a stick which was near him, he ran over the neighbouring plains and mountains, fancying that wild dogs were pursuing him. His wanderings led him, towards night, near the church, the roof of which was undergoing repair. Dunstan ran rudely up the scaffold which the workmen had erected, roamed over the top, and with that good luck which delirium sometimes experiences, he got unconsciously to the bottom of the church, where he fell into a profound sleep. He awoke in the morning with returned intellect, and was naturally surprised at his new situation. As the church-doors had not been opened, both he and the neighbours wondered how he got

<sup>5</sup> De Illust. Angl. Script. p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> De Præsul Angl. p. 385.

there. His misadventure was converted by the monastic biographer of Dunstan into a notable miracle of angels descending to protect him from the devil, bursting the roof of the church and landing him safely on the pavement. His parents obtained for him an introduction into the ecclesiastical establishment of his native place, where he continued his application to study. There were at the time some Irish priests employed at Glastonbury in teaching the liberal sciences to the children of the nobility ; and to their instructions Dunstan attached himself, and diligently explored their books. His youth was thus devoted to the laborious cultivation of his mind ; and he seems to have attained all the knowledge to which it was possible for him to gain access. He mastered such of the mathematical sciences as were then taught ; he excelled in music ; he accomplished himself in writing, painting, and engraving ; he acquired also the manual skill of working in gold and silver, and even in copper and iron. These arts at that day had not reached any high state of perfection, but it was uncommon that a man should practise himself in them all. When his age admitted, he was, through the interest of his uncle, the archbishop of Canterbury, who had taken particular care of his education, recommended to the patronage of King Athelstan, who invited him to court, and was often delighted and recreated by his musical talents. His surprising attainments were deemed supernatural, and he was accused of demoniacal arts. Such charges give evidence not only of the ignorance of the age, but of the superior genius and knowledge of the individual so accused. The charge of magic was, of all others, the most dangerous, because the most difficult to repel. Dunstan's enemies were successful ; the king was influenced against him, and he was driven from court,—the Eden of his aspiring hopes. Not content with his disgrace, his rivals insulted as well as supplanted him ; they pursued him and threw him into a miry bog, from which he extricated himself, and took shelter in a friend's house. Checked at the outset of his career, Dunstan turned his eye from the tempestuous height of courtly jealousy and ambition, to the quietude of domestic happiness. The aspirations of his mind took a new direction, and sought gratification in legitimate wedlock ; but the rigours of monastic penance had denounced these pleasures, and Dunstan's passion was ascribed to diabolical suggestions. His relatives opposed this honourable attachment, they opened the batteries of their superstitious eloquence against the heinous sin of matrimony, conjuring him, as he hoped for salvation, to restrain nature and become a monk. Dunstan defended his propensities on the score both of morality and public utility. His friends set before him the terrors of future damnation, urging the necessity of extinguishing the fires of unhallowed passion, and avoiding its incitements by withdrawing from the world. These importunities unhinged the mind of Dunstan ; he was terrified at the idea of eternal punishment, but was unable to tear himself from the raptures of love, and those exquisite delights which he anticipated in the connubial state. His health was unequal to this tumult of contending passions ; a dangerous disease attacked him before he could decide whether to abandon his wife, or his hopes of felicity in another world, and his life was despaired of ; at length he recovered, but he rose from the bed of sickness with an altered mind. In the struggle between carnal and spiritual enjoyment, superstition gained the mastery.

He renounced the world and all its seductions, assumed the monastic habit, and condemned himself to celibacy. But it was less from religious principle than from fear and importunity that Dunstan had thus done violence to his inclinations. His ruling passions were impetuosity and ambition; and the path of life into which he was forced did not extinguish these energies; it only gave them a new bent, by teaching him to make superstition more glaring, and austerity more morose. Having nothing left in life, the ardent recluse sought a living grave. The ordinary rigours of the cloister did not suffice to Dunstan, for the miserable man was in that state of affliction when corporeal sufferings relieve the agony of the mind by diverting the attention from the more intense torture of the soul. He dug with his own hands a sort of rude cave or cell by the side of the church; his biographer Osborne, who had seen it, knew not what to call it. It was more like a tomb than a human habitation. The excavation was five feet long, and two and a half wide. It rose only four feet above the ground, but its depth was sufficient for him to stand erect, though he could never lie down. Its only wall was the door, which covered the whole, and in which was a small aperture to admit light and air. In this sepulchre he took up his abode, denying himself rest as well as needful food. He fasted to the point of starvation, constantly working at his forge when not employed in prayer. The hammer was always sounding, except when silenced by his orisons. There is little reason to wonder at the return of Dunstan's partial insanity during his seclusion; and an incident occurred which, though it added greatly to his reputation, bespoke the disease of his mind as well as the arts that gained him his popularity. While exercising at his work one night, the whole neighbourhood was alarmed by the most terrific "howlings, which seemed to issue from his cell. In the morning all flocked to inquire the cause. Dunstan told them that the devil had intruded his head into his window to tempt him while heating his metal: that he had seized the fiend by the nose with his red hot pincers, and that the noise was the roaring of the infernal enemy!"<sup>1</sup> The rude people venerated the recluse for this amazing exploit. His fame spread, and votaries from far and wide were attracted by his sanctity. He soon got a more substantial benefit than empty praise. Ethelfleda, a noble lady, who was spending her days in quiet widowhood, sought his acquaintance, was charmed with his conversation, and formed a religious attachment to him. She introduced him to the king, and at her death, which happened soon after, she left him the heir of all her wealth. If it be true that he distributed this inheritance, as well as his ample patrimony, among the poor, it can only be attributed to his insatiable thirst for popular applause.

Dunstan's celebrity made him known to Edmund, the successor of Athelstan, who invited him to court. The royal offer was accepted, and he determined to use all his influence for the advancement of his order, for he had renounced all the pleasures and ties of the world. The first step of his future aggrandisement was laid by the acquisition of the monastery of Glastonbury, to which he was appointed abbot by the king, who granted him a new charter in 944, and by his munificence enabled him to restore it to its former lustre.<sup>2</sup> The Bene-

<sup>1</sup> Angl. Sacra, tom. ii. p. 97.    <sup>2</sup> Malm. lib. ii. cap. 7.—Angl. Sacra, tom. ii. p. 100.



dietine order was then creeping into notoriety. Dunstan introduced it into his monastery, and it became a powerful auxiliary to his ambition. The new abbot gained so rapidly on the prejudices of his age, that his youth—he could not be more than twenty—was no impediment to his success. The see of Winchester was afterwards offered him by the king, but he declined it under the pretence of unfitness, alleging that, in a vision, St Peter had promised to him hereafter the primacy of England, a dignity to which the king could not well-refuse his approbation, seeing it had been sanctioned by the prediction of an apostle. These appeals to celestial communication greatly augmented the credit of Dunstan. He even alleged that an ethereal voice had, in thunder, announced to him the death of Edred, who had been in feeble health all his reign. He gained entirely the confidence of this monarch, who placed every office in the government completely under his power and control. The king could not nominate the abbot as heir to the throne, but he bequeathed all his property and treasures to him.<sup>3</sup>

The monk, on his part, became a statesman and an intriguer, constantly exerting all the power which he derived from his rank, and all the influence resulting from his character for the main purpose of furthering his party views. Placed as he was, at the head of the administration, consulted in all important affairs of state, and being possessed of great credit at court as well as among the populace, he was enabled to execute his most daring schemes with success. Finding that his advancement had been owing to the opinion of his austerity, he adopted the Benedictine discipline, became its strenuous patron, and having introduced it into the convents of Glastonbury and Abingdon, he endeavoured to render it universal in the kingdom. When Edwy succeeded to the throne, the haughty and disrespectful conduct of Dunstan, in bursting into the queen's private chamber on the day of the coronation, soon placed him in collision with the new king.<sup>4</sup> He was accused of malversation in office, and banished the kingdom. He took refuge in the monastery of St Peter at Ghent, and a legend says that, when he was about to quit the abbey, a loud fiendish laugh of exultation resounded through the sacred building:—"Thou shalt have more sorrow at my return than thou hast joy at my departure!" exclaimed Dunstan, addressing himself to his old enemy Satan. The civil commotions in England prepared the way for Dunstan's triumphant return. The popularity of the reformation he had introduced into the monasteries gained him many supporters; and, on the death of Edwy, he was restored by Edgar, who patronised the Benedictine order, and exalted Dunstan to the highest honours both in church and state. He made him bishop of Winchester, and afterwards of London; and, on the death of Odo, he was elevated to the arch-see of Canterbury.<sup>5</sup> He did not blush to accept this supremacy, and, in compliance with a custom that all metropolitans should receive the pall from the pope, Dunstan hastened to Rome and obtained the necessary ratification from John XII.

This ambitious and crafty monk was now not only primate, but premier of England. The arts by which he secured his power and popularity were numerous. He filled every vacant see with his own par-

<sup>3</sup> Inett's Church Hist. vol. i. p. 316.

<sup>4</sup> P 50.

<sup>5</sup> Angl. Sacra, tom. i. p. 107.

tisans, while the king meekly and pliantly submitted. One of his stratagems was the faculty which he claimed of conversing with the spiritual world, by which means he learned many heavenly songs, and saw many extraordinary visions. Some of these evinced a degree of impudence and impiety—for he declared that the Saviour had espoused his mother—that, did they not come from the pen of a contemporary, it were absolutely impossible to credit them. By his influence over the king, he contrived to expel the secular clergy from their livings, which were filled with Benedictines, a revolution which brought the English church more under the jurisdiction of the Roman pontiff than it had ever been; and the effect of which continued to be felt till the reformation.<sup>6</sup> These violent changes were not relished by the generality of the nation; but, by the favour of the king, Dunstan contrived to maintain his ascendancy. During the minority of Edward, he ruled with uncontrolled sway both in church and state. But the minds of the nobility were alienated; the pretended visions of Dunstan had lost their effect, and he was compelled to the humiliation of meeting his adversaries in the synods held for the purpose of deciding the momentous questions by which the church and the country were agitated. Irritated at the failure of his alleged revelations, this overbearing prelate had recourse to an artifice of the most atrocious nature,—no less than a deliberate attempt to destroy his opponents. A council was summoned at Calne in Wiltshire, and the best part of the nobility of England were assembled in an upper chamber. When several speakers had addressed the meeting, Dunstan rose and made a short reply, in which he avoided entering into any argument, declaring that he desired nothing but to end his days in peace, and to commit the cause of the church to the decision of Christ. He had scarcely uttered these words when the floor, with its beams and planks, suddenly gave way, and precipitated the whole company among the ruins below. Many of the nobles were killed on the spot, and others grievously wounded and bruised. It was observed in this general wreck, that the chair of Dunstan was unmoved, and part of the floor where his friends sat remained firm, a circumstance which proves the whole to have been the result of fraudulent design and not of accident.<sup>7</sup> On the accession of Ethelred, his power and credit declined. He threatened his enemies with the divine vengeance; but the contempt in which his menaces were held are said to have mortified him to such a degree that he retired to his archbishopric, where he died of grief and vexation on the 19th of May, 988. A volume of his works was published at Douay in 1626. His ambition has given him a place in ecclesiastical history, and he must indeed have been a man of very extraordinary talents. Dr Burney in his history notices his skill in music. That accomplishment constituted his chief delight; he touched the harp with great skill; and if, as we are told in the legends, the strain burst forth from its chords when struck by no visible hand, we may suppose that his mechanical skill had enabled him to produce the melody by some of those contrivances now familiar to us, but of which the effect might then be ascribed to supernatural power. From an obscure expression in Ger-vase, it seems not improbable that, in addition to his skill in drawing

<sup>6</sup> P. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Spelm. Cencil. 494 — Angl. Sacra, tom. ii. p. 112.

and engraving, he practised something like printing, or at least formed types or letters of metal.

## Ælfric.

DIED A. D. 1005.

ST DUNSTAN was succeeded in the see of Canterbury by Ethelgar, bishop of Seolsey, who enjoyed the archiepiscopal dignity only one year and three months. Siricius, bishop of Wilton, was next elevated to the primacy. His successor Ælfric acted a more distinguished part in the ecclesiastical annals of his country. He was one of the most learned men of his age, and translated a great number of homilies from the Latin into the Saxon language for the use of his clergy.<sup>1</sup> These discourses were designed to be read by the inferior clergy to their congregations; and the following passage from the homily for Easter Sunday may serve as a specimen both of the theology and pulpit-oratory of the times: "The body that Christ suffered in was born of the flesh of Mary, with blood and with bone,—with skin and with sinews,—in human limbs,—with a reasonable living soul. But his spiritual body—which we call the housel<sup>2</sup>—is gathered of many corns, without blood and bone,—without limb,—without soul. And therefore nothing is to be understood therein bodily but spiritually. Whatever is in the housel which giveth life, that is spiritual virtue and invisible energy. Christ's body that suffered death, and rose from death, shall never die again, but is eternal and impassible; but housel is temporal, not eternal,—corruptible,—and dealed into sundry parts, chewed between the teeth, and sent into the belly. This mystery is a pledge and a figure; Christ's body is truth itself. This pledge we do keep mystically until we come to the truth itself; and then is this pledge ended."<sup>3</sup> It would certainly not be easy to prove from this passage that the church of England had at this period received the doctrine of transubstantiation. Paschasius had already maintained in his treatise 'concerning the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ,' that, after consecration of the elements, nothing remains of the bread and wine except the outward figure, under which the body and blood of Christ were really and locally present; and that the body of Christ thus present is the same body which was born of the Virgin and suffered upon the cross.<sup>4</sup> These opinions were combated, at the moment of their promulgation, by Ratramn and Johannes Scotus, who maintained that the bread and wine were no more than symbols of the absent body and blood of Christ, and memorials of the last supper. The controversy thus excited died away before the end of the 9th century, and was not renewed again till some years after the death of Ælfric.

There is extant a kind of episcopal charge—commonly called 'Ælfric's canons'—which seems to have been drawn up by this excellent prelate for the guidance of the bishops in instructing the clergy. These injunctions or canons are 37 in number, and contain many curious

<sup>1</sup> Ælfrici Præf. sec. a Gram. suam, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> The element of bread in the communion.

<sup>3</sup> Bed. Hist. Eccl. p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Fleury.



particulars concerning the discipline and ceremonies of the church of England in those times. In the first eight, Ælfric argues strenuously for the celibacy of the priesthood, and in opposition, it would appear from his language, to the prevailing sentiments and practice of the body in England. "These canons against the marriage of priests"—says the archbishop—"seem strange to you to hear, for ye have so brought your wretched doings into fashion as if there was no danger in priests living like married men. The priests now reply, that St Peter was a married man, and that they cannot live without the company of a woman." By the 9th of these canons, the clergy are forbidden to be present at a marriage, or to give their benediction, when either of the parties had been married before. The next seven canons describe the names and offices of the seven orders of the clergy. These are: 1. The ostiary, whose duty it is to open and shut the church-doors, and ring the bells. 2. The lector, whose duty it is to read God's word in the church. 3. The exorcist, whose office is to drive out evil spirits by invocation and adjurations. 4. The acolyth, who holds the tapers at the reading of the gospel and celebration of mass. 5. The sub-deacon, who is to bring forth the holy vessels and attend the deacon at the altar. 6. The deacon, who ministers to the mass-priest, places the oblation on the altar, reads the gospel, baptizes children, and gives the housel to the people. 7. The mass-priest, or presbyter, who preaches, baptizes, and consecrates the housel. The 18th canon recognises the distinction between the secular clergy and the monks or regulars. The 19th commands the clergy to sing the seven tide-songs at the appointed hours, viz. The eight-song, or matins, early in the morning; the prime-song at seven o'clock; the undern-song at nine o'clock; the mid-day song at twelve o'clock; the none-song at three o'clock afternoon; and the night-song at nine o'clock in the evening. By the 21st canon priests are commanded to provide themselves with all the necessary books for performance of divine service, viz. The psalter, the epistle-book, the gospel-book, the mass-book, the song-book, the hand-book, the kalendar, the passional, the penitential, and the reading-book. By the 23d, priests are commanded to explain the gospel for the day, every Sunday, in English to the people, and to teach them the creed, and Lord's prayer, in English, as often as they can. By the 27th, priests are forbidden to take money for baptizing children, or performing any other part of their duty. The 32d commands them always to have a sufficient quantity of oil by them, which has been consecrated by the bishop, for baptizing children and anointing the sick. The 37th and last of these canons is in the form of an epistle, which was to be given to each priest on Maunday-Thursday when he came or sent to the bishop for his annual stock of consecrated chrism and oil, and contains a variety of minute directions about the celebration of mass and other offices. Among other ceremonies directed to be performed on Good-Friday, the people are ordered to adore and kiss the cross. A great number of fast-days are commanded to be observed, particularly every Friday, except from Easter to Pentecost, and from Midwinter to Twelfth-Night. Sunday was to be kept from Saturday at noon till Monday morning.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Spelm. Concil. Tom. i. p. 572—582.—Johnson's canons, A. D. 957.

Ælfrie expelled all the regular canons, who would not abandon their wives, from the cathedral church of Canterbury, and instituted Benedictine monks into their places. He had also sufficient influence to procure a charter from King Ethelred in favour of the monks. This seems to have been the last transaction of this prelate's life. He died in 1005, and was succeeded by Elphegus, bishop of Winchester.

## **Aldhun, Bishop of Durham.**

DIED A. D. 1018.

ALDHUN was the first bishop of Durham. He succeeded Elfsig in the see of Lindisfarne or Holy Island, in the year 990, being the 12th of King Ethelred. He was noble by birth, according to Simeon of Durham, but much more so by his virtues and his religious deportment. He was a monk not merely in the external garb of the order, but in the real sanctity of his character. After a residence of six years in Lindisfarne, the incursions of the Danish pirates, to which the island was greatly exposed, obliged him to think of removing; though some authors allege he was induced to this resolution by a direct admonition from heaven. Whatever his motives were, whether celestial or piratical, he left the place, taking with him the body of St Cuthbert, which had been buried there about a hundred and thirteen years. He was accompanied by the monks and the whole population; and after wandering about for some time, at last he settled with his followers at Durham, or Dunelm, consisting then only of a few scattered huts or cottages. The ground, we are told, was covered with a very thick wood, which the reverend prelate, with the assistance of the people, managed to cut down and clear away. Having assigned them their respective habitations by lot, he began to build a church, which he finished in three years, and dedicated to St Cuthbert, the bones of that saint being deposited within it. From that time the episcopal see which had been placed at Lindisfarne by bishop Aidan, remained fixed at Durham, and the new cathedral church was endowed with considerable benefactions by Ethelred, and several of the nobility. Aldhun had a daughter, Egfrid, whom he gave in marriage to Uethred, earl of Northumberland, and with her as dowry, six towns belonging to the episcopal see, on condition that he should never divorce her. This condition, however, was afterwards broken; for Malcolm, king of Scotland, having invaded Northumberland and laid siege to Durham, Uethred, putting himself at the head of the Northumbrian and Yorkshire men, fell upon the Scots, and gave them a total overthrow, the king himself narrowly escaping by flight. The young earl, flushed with his honours, and perhaps thinking himself entitled to a higher alliance, repudiated the bishop's daughter without assigning any reason, and was shortly after united to Elgina the daughter of king Ethelred. Egfrid was again divorced from her second husband, a thane in Warwickshire, after which she returned to Durham, and shut herself up in a convent during the rest of her life. The dotal lands and the six towns were restored the church. Aldhun was preceptor to the king's two sons; and when their father was driven from his throne by Sweyn king of Denmark, in the year 1016, he conducted

them, together with Queen Emma, into Normandy to Duke Richard the queen's brother. The terrible overthrow which the English received in 1018, from the Scots, proved fatal to the venerable Aldhun. He was so affected by the news that he died a few days after. "Wretch that I am," said the expiring prelate when he heard of the disaster, "why have I lived to see this time! Was it to behold the destruction of my people? O holy confessor Cuthbert! if I have done any thing pleasing in thy sight, now reward me by not permitting me to witness the slaughter of thy people." He held the prelacy twenty-nine years, and was esteemed a pious and good man.





HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO SECOND PERIOD,

EXTENDING

FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE ACCESSION OF EDWARD I.

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

OF

**Eminent Englishmen**

WHO FLOURISHED DURING THAT PERIOD.





# HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO

## SECOND PERIOD.

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State of the Anglo-Saxons at the conquest—Of the Normans—Improvement of the English character after the conquest—State of property after the conquest—Feudal system established—Power of the crown limited by the great council—The Saxon wittenagemote—The great council—The words *baron*, &c. used in various meanings—Vagueness in the more minute descriptions of the great council—Attendance of others than the crown-tenants not improbable in the state of society—Whether any representative system, 1. Of counties—2. Of burghs—Final introduction of representation by the earl of Leicester; his character—Improvement in manners; its causes—Causes which checked the prerogative—Decline of the county-courts—Clerical power—Remarks on the various charters.

BEFORE the time of the conquest, the Anglo-Saxon government had fallen into a state of great weakness and decay. The Danish invasions had mainly contributed to check the progress of improvement; and an oligarchy which had obtained possession of a large portion of the property, and of the whole administration, of the country, and was at once effeminate and factious, domineered over a succession of feeble sovereigns, and oppressed the people. The influence of Earl Godwin—the father of King Harold—and of his family, was especially predominant. Never distinguished by refinement, the Saxons, under these adverse circumstances, appeared to be descending even in the scale of civilization. Their houses were mean, inelegant, and uncomfortable; they prized such ornaments as strike the fancy of a rude people—bracelets, ear-rings, silken attire, and all kinds of gaudy personal decorations; their chivalry had only the most repulsive features of that fantastic institution; and though they aimed at many of the luxuries of a more advanced stage of society, their history teems with examples of the most savage barbarism. If the church could boast of having remained in a great measure independent of the Roman see, the clergy had not escaped the infection of a declining age, and were remarkable only for their ignorance or their vices. Learning had retrograded since the days of Athelstan. The best Anglo-Saxon writers, Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface, Alcuin, and King Alfred, flourished as early as the 8th and 9th centuries; and the vernacular poetry, though it lasted longer than more serious composition, does not possess sufficient merit to redeem the nation from the charge of intellectual debasement. It is a curious fact, however, that even at this time, the English artists had obtained a decided superiority over their continental neighbours in the manufacture of various articles of the most delicate workmanship.

Such was the condition of the Anglo-Saxons at the period of the Norman invasion. The Normans were the most enterprising of the northern nations; and were celebrated for their love of glory and contempt of danger. Their incipient civilization had been exhibited before they left the shores of the Baltic; after their settlement in France, they were still distinguished for daring adventure. Piety and romantic ardour impelled them to undertake distant pilgrimages, in which they displayed alternately the devotion of the Christian, and the ferocity of the lawless warrior: and Europe had witnessed with astonishment the brilliant exploits of a handful of Normans,—the founders of a new and powerful dynasty in the south of Italy. The spirit of the people was fostered, too, by the enjoyment of comparative freedom; for like that of all the tribes of Gothic origin, their polity had many of the elements of an equal constitution, and the great council of the barons presented the rude model of a more perfect government. But implicit credit should not be given to subsequent historians, who, after the increased reputation of the Norman name, have drawn flattering descriptions of the early learning and industry of the nation, their liberality and love of justice, and their proficiency in some of the more refined arts of civilized society. The freshness of their character, and their susceptibility of improvement, seem, after all, to be the points in which their superiority to the Anglo-Saxons principally consisted. Neither people were free from the sensual effeminacy which some writers would affix to the Saxons alone, though, among the Normans, it had not sunk so deep, nor been of so long continuance, and was not therefore so irretrievable. Notwithstanding their greater alleged purity, the Norman ecclesiastics were often as shameless in their conduct as their Anglo-Saxon brethren. A provincial council, held at Rouen in the year 1055, attempted to check the open immorality of these holy personages; but the warnings of prudence or of virtue were unheeded: and when, at another synod, one of their number ventured to renew the unwelcome topic, his admonitions were drowned in the angry murmurs of the assembly, and the council of the church ended in a disgraceful scene of riot and bloodshed.<sup>1</sup> It appears, indeed, that the earliest specimens of Norman literature are posterior to the reign of the Conqueror; and that the rise of a more peaceful and studious spirit among the clergy, is to be attributed in a great degree to the influence of foreign monks, as the increased cultivation of the people was owing to the higher motives for exertion, and the advantage of a more extensive communication with other states, which resulted from the conquest.

The same causes, along with others, were instrumental in the gradual improvement of the English. Though degenerate and disunited, the Saxons were not wanting in courage; and even after the battle of Hastings, if a leader had appeared equal to the emergency, they might probably have repulsed their enemies. But ill-concerted risings strengthened the Norman government: and the rapid confiscation of their property, and their exclusion from all offices, reduced the native population to dependence and poverty. No revolution which history has recorded, ever produced a more sweeping change of property, without,

<sup>1</sup> Ord. Vital. p. 886, apud Duchesne,—*Rer. Norman. Scriptores*.—*Depping Hist. des Exped. Maritimes des Normands*, ii, 216.

at the same time, overthrowing the fundamental constitution of the country. Yet, accompanied as the Norman revolution was with much individual suffering, and many acts of the most sanguinary and atrocious tyranny, it ultimately exercised a beneficial influence upon the condition of the vanquished. It revived their sinking energies; and the very miseries endured by the immediate victims of the Conqueror's ambition, roused a bolder spirit in the next generation. In no other way, perhaps, could the career of national decline have been stayed; and it was fortunate that many circumstances combined to produce a speedy amalgamation of the two races, and the consequent rise of the English from the depression to which they had been reduced. Long before the end of the reign of Henry III.—the period embraced in this introductory chapter—the distinction of origin had ceased to be practically regarded; and the constitution, operated upon alike by customs of Norman and Saxon growth, was in a state of rapid developement. In a review of this period, the most interesting and instructive objects of consideration are the alterations in the state of society arising from the conquest; its effect upon the institutions of the country; and the nature and progress of the great council or parliament of the kingdom. Historical events, the manners, and scanty learning of the age, will be treated of with most propriety in the lives of the different monarchs, or of those persons whose importance entitles them to a place in this work. It may only be observed, as a proof of the advancement of the people, that the desire of knowledge became pretty general soon after the conquest. The Latin literature was cultivated,—the Anglo-Norman clergy aspired to, and obtained, scholastic distinctions,—and two successive archbishops of Canterbury, Lanfranc, a Lombard of humble origin, and Anselm, were highly celebrated for learning and genius by their contemporaries. Some writers have bestowed considerable praise upon the monkish chronicles and histories of the time; and they are, perhaps, superior to the annals of the surrounding kingdoms. As specimens of historical composition, they have little or no merit; but they form an uninterrupted series, and are often written with surprising impartiality. But not only was learning valued: respect was also paid to its professors. It was at the request of the earl of Gloucester, the natural son of Henry I., that Malmesbury wrote his history; and a bishop of Lincoln induced Henry of Huntingdon to compile his annals. Henry I. himself, acquired the surname of Beauclerc, as the mark of literary superiority. Libraries were collected; and numerous manuscripts transcribed at the principal monasteries, with unusual elegance. Every thing showed that the character of the nation was invigorated. In the reign of Henry I., the instructions of four monks at Cambridge, collected so large an audience, from all parts of the kingdom, that no building was sufficient to contain them: and the love of knowledge, encouraged by the church, received a new impulse from the crusades, and the frequent journeys to the Holy Land, which enlarged the views and stimulated the curiosity of the people.

But the times of the Conqueror were distinguished only by the persecution of his English subjects, and the introduction of changes, at once the result and the motive of that course of policy. William was an able and remorseless tyrant, who, to establish his power, scrupled not at the commission of the most horrible excesses. If his sagacity



told him that a new parcelling out of the country was the surest stay of Norman predominance; the compilation of Domesday, by his orders, may prove his anxiety to be minutely informed of its accomplishment. That invaluable record was intended to contain a survey of all the lands in the kingdom,—of the names of their then possessors, as well as of those who had them in the Confessor's reign,—and likewise of the number and apportionment of the freemen, villains, cottagers, and slaves. But as the chief object of interest was the extent of the king's own demesnes and those of his tenants-in-chief, only an account of these is complete. Domesday affords, however, a very interesting description of the state of property to which the conquest had led. It appears from it that the tenants-in-chief of the crown did not amount to 700 in England, except the four northern counties, which were not included in the survey. Of these 700, almost all were Normans. Cospatric, son of the earl of Northumberland of that name, is one of the few persons whom we can distinguish as of Saxon birth. Of the sub-tenants, however, of whom, it is generally supposed, that Domesday contains but a partial enumeration, a great proportion were undoubtedly Saxons. The king himself was the greatest landed proprietor, possessing no fewer than 1432 manors in different parts of the kingdom. Many of the Norman chieftains had obtained enormous grants from the crown, as well of the lands which had been confiscated after the battle of Hastings, as of those seized during the numerous risings in which the English engaged. These lands they again let out, often with equal liberality, to their immediate followers, or allowed to remain in the hands of the old proprietors, under the burden of feudal services. Thus, though the number of tenants-in-chief was comparatively small, there were no fewer than 60,215 knights' fees in England, 28,015 of which are said to have been in the hands of the clergy.<sup>2</sup> But many of these knight-fees were of little value. The unsettled state of the country had destroyed its fertility; and we have a striking picture of the ravages which had been committed in the Conqueror's reign, in the fact, that the houses in the towns were reduced, on an average, to at least one-half of the number existing in the days of the Confessor. "Know," said a tenant-in-chief to Henry II., "that I hold of you a very poor fee of one knight, nor have I enfeoffed any other therein, because it is hardly sufficient for me alone, and my father held it in the same manner."<sup>3</sup>

Along with this new distribution of property, as may appear from the terms descriptive of it, the feudal system was finally established. Express enactments may have been made to extend and confirm that system, but the situation of the country, the manners, and, above all, the security of the Norman power, were the immediate and necessary causes of its full introduction. That it was brought over by the Conqueror from Normandy, is the general statement of historians; but there is no sufficient evidence of its complete existence in that country at so early a period. The truth is, that wherever the authority of law

<sup>2</sup> Madox Hist. of Excheq. c. 15, p. 400, 401. At an early period of the Saxon power, Spelman says that England was divided into 243,600 hydes, or plough lands, according to which, military and other services were imposed.

<sup>3</sup> Some of the crown-tenants had only very small portions of a knight's fee.—Brady's Animadversions, 185, 186.

is doubtful, more especially, as in England after the conquest,—where an army of foreigners have depressed the native inhabitants, and seized their lands,—the completion of such a plan of mutual defence and aggression is unavoidable. Even in the Saxon times, if the feudal connection were not drawn so close, and did not so materially affect the institutions of the country; or though the—perhaps adventitious—casualties of wardship (the right of the overlord to the custody of the person and estate of his minor vassal), or of marriage (his right to control the marriage of that vassal being cessmale), were not known, we can discern elements of the system. No great distinction can be drawn between the *heriot*, well known to the Anglo-Saxons, whatever portion of the property it may primarily have affected, and the *relief* of Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. Both were payments, required by law, by a vassal, or whatever else we may term him, to an overlord, on succeeding to the estate of his ancestor, and were originally perhaps intended as a price for the renewal of the right. The *trinoda necessitas*, indeed, of the Saxon laws, or the obligation of military service in defence of the state—which is mentioned as early as the time of Ina;<sup>4</sup> the burthen of repairing bridges and the royal fortresses; are to be likened rather to the duties of a free citizen, than to the feudal, stated obligation of the vassal to contribute to the ransom of his lord from captivity,—to the knighthood of the lord's eldest son,—or to the marriage of his eldest daughter; the undoubted tokens of dependence or subjection. But, on the other hand, there can be no question that the Saxons were familiar with beneficiary possessions; that feudal homage is often mentioned; nay, that the very word *vassal* occurs in an early period of their history.<sup>5</sup> They had fines for alienations; and their escheats were in some cases more rigorous than any known on the continent in the strictest periods of the feudal law. The Irish judges, in the great case of tenures, supposed further, that the greater thanes among the Saxons were the king's immediate tenants of lands by personal service, and that the land so held was termed *thaneland*, as land holden in soccage was known by the name of *reveland*. The title of thane, they imagined, was changed to that of baron after the conquest.<sup>6</sup> Sir Henry Spelman himself, the great advocate of the nonexistence of the feudal system under the Saxon government, admitted, that land granted only at will, or for a limited number of years, and which came under the denomination of *folkland*, was frequent in the times of the Saxons; though, in his opinion, their hereditary estates, termed *thaneland* or *bocland*, were allodial, and not liable to feudal service.<sup>7</sup> Lands of the former description were, as he thought, benefices, and after the conquest, were, along with the bocland or charterland, converted into hereditary fiefs. And as many persons had lands of both sorts, the feudalizing of one of them was compensated by the conversion of the temporary right to the other into a title of hereditary enjoyment. That the feudal system was altogether a Norman invention, appears, therefore, to be too broad an assertion; and the truth may be said to lie midway between the authors who contend for the complete deve-

<sup>4</sup> Millin's Leg. Anglo-Sax. p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Asser, p. 33.

<sup>6</sup> Case of Tenures upon the Commission of Defective Titles, 8vo, 1720.

<sup>7</sup> Spelman on Tenures, c. 12, c. 5.

lopement of that system under the Anglo-Saxon monarchy, and those who deny that there was the slightest approximation to it. At all events, the Saxon vassals by choice—the usual way, indeed, by which, on the continent, allodial was changed into feudal property, and likewise entitled, on the death of the overlord, to select any other superior they thought fit<sup>s</sup>—as well as those vassals whose relation to their superior was of a more feudal character, presenting at least the appearance of obligation to military service, were, in the Norman times, equally brought under the control of strictly feudal relationship.

Notwithstanding the transfer of a large portion of the country to the Norman leaders,—the introduction of institutions of Norman origin,—and in particular, the new modelling, to a great extent, of the tenure by which land was held,—many of the old customs were retained, especially those which related to the internal administration of the executive government, and the distribution of justice. The conquest effected no radical change in the principles of the constitution; and it is certain, that in the reign of the Conqueror and his sons, the county and the hundred courts, perhaps the most remarkable features of Saxon legislation, remained in full activity; and upon the whole, the ancient laws do not seem to have been altered even so far as might have been looked for from the violent change which had taken place, and the rigorous precautions adopted to quell frequent insurrections. The Norman settlement, in short, was the substitution of a new oligarchy for an old one; not the entrance of a nation after the expulsion of another, as had been the case when the Saxons came into Britain. But when property was subdivided in the course of a few reigns, the body of the people rose in importance; and the genius of Saxon equality, which had continued to lurk in the county and hundred courts, acquired additional vigour. It has been already noticed, that though the lands held of the crown were almost entirely in the hands of the new race, many of the Saxon proprietors held their former possessions under the king's grantees. The subdivision of the lands belonging to the crown-tenants, led to an increased influence amongst these other portions of the community. Normandy, too, soon came to be regarded as a province of England; nor did it remain long subject to the English kings. It was separated from England in the reign of William Rufus, and during that of Henry I., till the defeat and captivity of his brother Robert; again in Stephen's reign; and finally in that of John, whose son and successor, Henry III., solemnly renounced all claim to the dukedom of Normandy, in favour of the crown of France. The great body of the Normans, therefore, who were little inclined to submit to arbitrary rule, looked to England as their native country, and united with the English in forcing from their sovereigns repeated promises to adhere to the old Saxon laws,—a demand which at least shows a traditional belief that these laws were more equitable than many of the customs which the conquest had introduced, and evinced a determination to impose more effectual checks upon the royal authority than had been in operation for some time after the conquest.

The immediate successors of the Conqueror were the most arbitrary in their conduct; but none of them reached the height of power which

<sup>s</sup> Domesday, 287, a. 6, 7, 129.—Lingard's Hist. of England, i. 458.



he attained. Though the government of William Rufus was lawless—the monks have, however, exhibited it in the darkest colours—yet, being less popular among the nobles than his elder brother, Robert, duke of Normandy, whom he excluded from the throne, he found it necessary to throw himself in a great measure upon the support of his English subjects. If Henry I. changed his policy in this respect before the close of his reign, he was, on his accession, perhaps from the greater imperfection of his title, still more anxious than Rufus had been to conciliate their good-will, and, as the first act of his administration, granted a charter, in which he engaged that all the bad customs by which the kingdom had been oppressed, should be removed. The charter of Stephen—in the vulgar meaning of the word, an usurper—was still more explicit than that of Henry, though its execution was delayed by civil war.

But whatever the arbitrary practices of the crown in an unsettled age, the right of the sovereign to enact laws without the consent of the great council, or as it was afterwards termed, the parliament of the kingdom,<sup>9</sup> was not acknowledged, nor the attempt ventured, even in the times of the Conqueror. According to the words of a writ of summons to parliament, in the time of Edward I., it was always a maxim of the English constitution, “that what concerned all, should be done with the approbation of all; and that danger to the whole community, should be obviated by remedies provided by the whole community.”<sup>10</sup>

How the great councils were composed during the reigns of the first princes of the Norman and Plantagenet line, is, however, a question of considerable interest, with regard to which, it is proposed to enter into some discussion. Some of our most eminent antiquaries have represented them as formed on the model of the baronial courts of the different feudal lords, and, therefore, as attended only by the king's tenants-in-chief, or even a portion of their number. We shall, perhaps, have occasion to see that there was no very precise rule upon the subject; but, in the meantime, in reference to the opinion of those who argue for the constant and absolute exclusion of all but a very limited part of the community from these assemblies, it ought to be observed, that, as regards political subordination, the feudal system was not established in England in the vigour by which it was distinguished on the continent, and that the Saxon institutions retained strength sufficient to check the spirit of the feudal aristocracy. At the same time, the paramount authority of the king's courts over those of the nobles, in conjunction with the influence of the county and hundred courts, weakened the ties of feudal subjection, and tempered the feelings of the vassal with those of the citizen. Even in Normandy, the dependence of the vassal on his lord was not so deeply rooted as in the rest of France. The baronial courts had not so large a jurisdiction;<sup>11</sup> and the court of Exchequer, composed of the principal officers of the duke, and the barons, or their delegates, comprehended the whole duchy within its jurisdiction; examined into abuses, and received appeals from the inferior tribunals.

<sup>9</sup> *Parliament* was not a word in common use till the time of Edward I.; but in these remarks it has sometimes been used as synonymous with “the great council.”

<sup>10</sup> Rot Unus, 24. Ed. i. as cited by Lyttelton, *Hist. of Henry II.* ii. 279.—See also Bracton.

<sup>11</sup> Houard Anc. *Lois des Français.* i. p. 196.

In entering upon an inquiry into the constitution of the great council, it may be proper, in the first place, to state shortly the nature and functions of the Saxon *wittenagemote*, of which it was the successor. In conjunction with the king, the *wittenagemote* possessed all the powers of government. Its assent was necessary to the enactment of laws; it had the supreme judicial power of the kingdom; the question of peace and war lay with it; at its meetings grants of land by the crown were bestowed or confirmed. There, also, the election of bishops, subject to confirmation by the sovereign,<sup>12</sup> was sometimes made; and the prerogative of the assembly went the length of regulating the succession to the throne itself. The name of this council, invested with so great authority, means literally, the assembly of the wise men; and in the general descriptions of historians, it is said to have consisted of prelates and abbots, of the aldermen of shires, and of the wise men, great men, counsellors, and senators of the kingdom.<sup>13</sup> We have, however, only imperfect notices of the manner of its constitution. But it seems most probable, that "as the court of every tything, hundred, and shire was composed of the respective proprietors of land in those districts, the constituent members of the *wittenagemote* were the people of a similar description throughout the whole kingdom."<sup>14</sup> The passage in the register of Ely, from which some have inferred that no one had a right to appear in the assembly, unless he possessed an estate of 40 hides of land, or between 4000 and 5000 acres, does not warrant that conclusion.<sup>15</sup> If, then, all the proprietors of lands, or, as they were termed, thanes, who were very numerous, had the right of attending at the deliberations of the *wittenagemote*, that right must have been extensive; but it is also obvious, that the exercise of the abstract right would practically be but limited,—without representation it was useless; and is only deserving of remark, as it marks the popular bias of the Saxon polity. If, indeed, it could be shown that the dignity of alderman or earl, though in time it became hereditary or dependent upon the will of the monarch, had been originally an annual office, to which the freeholders in the county court had the right of election,<sup>16</sup> its possessor, when sitting in the *wittenagemote*, might not inaptly be considered a representative of the county over which he presided. But the Saxon chronicle informs us, that the king, in early times, had the nomination of the dukes, earls, and sheriffs of the counties; and Alfred appears, of his own authority, to have deposed several ignorant aldermen.<sup>17</sup>

Like the *wittenagemote* of the Saxon monarchy, the great council, after the conquest, possessed the supreme legislative and judicial power of the realm. It was generally assembled at the three festivals of Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide. The Easter council was usually summoned by the Conqueror to Winchester; the Whitsuntide one to

<sup>12</sup> Eddius, cap. 2.—Hume, i. 203.

<sup>13</sup> Turner's History of the Anglo-Saxons, iv. 275.

<sup>14</sup> Millar's Historical View of the Eng. Gov. i. 205.—Spelman Concil. sub ann. 555.

<sup>15</sup> Hallam's Middle Ages, ii. 388.—Sir William Dugdale was of opinion, that the same qualification was necessary to the creation of a parliamentary barony after the conquest.—Carte, ii. 246.—Dugdale's Preface to the Baronage of England.

<sup>16</sup> As supposed by Millar, i. 291, 293, 295.

<sup>17</sup> It deserves, however, to be noticed, that the laws of Edward the Confessor state expressly, § 35, that the heretochs, or dukes, were elected by the freeholders. The once popular notion, that the Anglo-Saxons had a representative system, may now be looked upon as altogether abandoned.

Westminster; that convoked at Christmas to Gloucester. But the same places were not chosen by succeeding monarchs. In describing the persons who attended these assemblies, historians enumerate the bishops, and abbots, the earls, barons, and knights, and in addition to these, the great men, 'Magnates,' 'Proceres;' and sometimes use the expression of 'the whole kingdom,' 'regnum Angliæ;' or 'all the community,' 'tota communitas regni.' The bishops and abbots sat in virtue, not of their clerical dignities, but as barons; the earls did not appear in right of their earldoms, but as tenants of land under the crown. With regard to the other classes of persons intended to be pointed at by the above-mentioned general phraseology, there is much dispute; and the difficulties are increased by the variety of meanings attached to the same expressions by contemporary writers, and in the documents of that period.

*Baron* was not a title of personal dignity till the reign of Richard II. and in the times which we are considering it was extended to all the immediate tenants of the crown by military service, and was frequently bestowed even upon the tenants of the crown's vassals.<sup>18</sup> All the king's tenants, therefore, by knight-service, (whether the right was confined to them shall be afterwards considered,) had undoubtedly a right to be present at the king's great council: and the theory which some have adopted, that the privilege of a barony, and of sitting in the legislature, was confined to the possessors of a certain number ( $13\frac{1}{3}$ ) of knight's fees is inconsistent with historical evidence.<sup>19</sup> The 11th article of the Constitutions of Clarendon, whilst it shows that all tenants *in capite* by knight-service were termed barons, leaves it doubtful whether even the crown's socage tenants were not sometimes dignified by the same title. In the 9th article of the same Constitutions, the word is applied to all persons having fiefs to which the right of holding courts belonged, whether they held of the king, or of a mesne lord, and therefore included every person possessing a manor with five tenants attached to it. Our historians at times bestow the appellation of baron upon all freeholders of the county court;<sup>20</sup> and the burgesses of the Cinque Ports, and the citizens of London, were addressed as 'barones' and 'eptimales' long before the reign of Henry III. In a writ of the 30th of that king, the former are expressly stated to have been present at a great council of the kingdom, and are named among the 'barones regni.' The Saxon chronicle uses the term 'thanos' for 'barones;' and in the convention between Stephen, and Henry duke of Normandy, afterwards Henry II., touching the succession to the crown, the barons are addressed after the sheriffs of counties; which could scarcely have happened if the former appellation had been confined to a small number of nobles.

There is equal uncertainty in regard to the precise meaning of the other generic terms by which the members of the great council are distinguished. Sometimes, as in one of the charters of Henry III., the word 'Magnates' includes prelates, earls, and barons, (that may, however, have a pretty wide compass) excluding all others;<sup>21</sup> elsewhere it is em-

<sup>18</sup> Rudborne Hist. Wint. p. 279.—Hody on Convocations, p. 288, 289.

<sup>19</sup> Lingard, II. 67, 68.

<sup>20</sup> M. Paris ad ann. 1237.—Fœd. I. 232.

<sup>21</sup> Fœd. I. 121.



ployed to designate persons not even barons,<sup>22</sup> and Bracton applies it to all the members of the great council. After the charters of Henry I. and Henry II. in virtue of which tenants of the crown could only be taxed of their own consent, the phrase of 'magnates regni' is used as a general description of the members of assemblies called for that purpose, where such persons at any rate must have been present; and after the attendance of knights of the shire in parliament became constant and unquestionable, they are addressed in the same manner. The words 'Milites' and 'Fideles' again, though often confined to the king's tenants by military service, are also on other occasions, conferred upon the tenants of mesne lords; or upon the freeholders, as in a writ to the sheriff of Worcester promulgating the great charter.<sup>23</sup>

These are a few of the instances which show that historians, and the imperfect records of the meetings of the great council, use the language descriptive of its members with so much vagueness, as to involve the question of the mode in which that assembly was composed in great obscurity. This much is evident, however, that when the attendance of the 'barones regni' is mentioned, we are not entitled to infer from that circumstance alone, that only the immediate tenants of the crown, still less a small fraction of them, were present. A term of phraseology, afterwards in a great measure applicable to the peerage, may have given undue weight to the opinions of the authors anxious to limit the numbers of those who had a voice in our early parliaments. But as the great council of the Anglo-Normans was a perpetuation of the Saxon wittenagemote, it acknowledged many principles not of feudal origin, and it seems to have obtained the character of having originally been a mere feudal court, rather from the general language by which in the prevalence of feudal notions it was described, than from a careful observation of the persons who frequently were summoned to its meetings.

The more minute descriptions by our ancient historians, of the constituent members of these assemblies, are extremely vague and indefinite; and they often state that resolutions were proposed or adopted with the consent of classes of men, whose presence they had not previously noticed. But while they may be considered as amply proving that the privilege of attendance was extended to all the tenants in chief of the crown by knight service, there are many passages which show, that though in point of constitutional right not essential, there were often many others present, not as spectators merely, but assisting in the deliberations. In a council held in the 4th year of William the Conqueror, twelve persons attended from each county, to declare the old laws and customs of the realm; a task in such times which it is very difficult to distinguish from that of legislation, and the imposition of which can hardly be reconciled with the idea that all interference in the administration of the government was of necessity confined to the immediate vassals of the crown.<sup>24</sup> Eadmer's description of a council held in the time of William Rufus, for the purpose of determining the dispute between the king and Archbishop Anselm is remarkable. The historian says that 'a great multitude of the people' were present at the assembly; and they appear from his account to have taken a share in

<sup>22</sup> Lord's report on the dignity of a peer, citing a writ of 38<sup>o</sup> Hen. III.

<sup>23</sup> *Fœd.* I. 147.

<sup>24</sup> Wilkins *Leg. Anglo-Sax.* 216.—Hoveden *Annals*, 343.

its deliberations.<sup>25</sup> Similar language is employed in the description of a council held in the year 1100 by Henry I., of another under the same monarch in 1114; and of one in the first year of Stephen. In 1157, Henry II. summoned 'the leaders and great men of the kingdom, and other persons of inferior rank' (*aliosque inferioris ordinis personas*).—There can be no question that the inferior clergy frequently attended, many of them who did not hold lands of the crown,<sup>26</sup> and that not in the mere humble character of attendants upon the dignified clergy. It was the case at the well-known council of Clarendon, and among the laity, besides the earls and barons, the older and more noble of the land (*nobiliores et antiquiores regni*) are also mentioned. Who these older men were it is more difficult to say, but the supposition is not improbable that they were men selected in each county, (perhaps by the freeholders) from their age and knowledge, best acquainted with the laws of the kingdom, and well fitted to participate in a council where very important questions were to be agitated. But too much stress ought not to be laid upon many of these apparently extensive enumerations. They show undoubtedly that others besides the king's vassals were often present; but the language is apt to mislead by its comprehensiveness. The phrases of the 'whole kingdom,' 'all the people,' seem indeed to have been often employed by the writers of the age to characterize any meeting of the great council, which assumed to itself, or had the power of binding the nation, just as in later times by common usage, the House of Commons was said to be composed of the representatives of the people, when the great proportion of its members had in fact no claim to that title.

It was not wonderful, however, as the relations of society then stood, that the king's great council should not have been composed, like the courts of the barons, only of the immediate tenants.—Doomsday proves that many of the tenants *in capite* were also vassals of other lords, and we find from the entries in the Black Book of the exchequer in the reign of Henry II. that the number of such persons had increased in the intervening periods. But as the crown vassals frequently burdened the lands of their subvassals with the whole amount of the services due by themselves to the crown, and thus had their own lands free from charge, their subtenants soon came to have an immediate interest in the consultations of the great council relative to taxation. And though the attendance of this last class of persons was not constant, and though their absence did not, at least originally, affect the force of the decisions of the great council, yet from the time of the conquest down to the final establishment of the representation of the commons in parliament, we have in every reign incontrovertible evidence of their occasional attendance. It has been supposed<sup>27</sup> that in those times, a distinction existed between the attendance necessary at a council where measures were to be adopted between subject and subject, or between the crown and the subject, apart from taxation, and a council where additional taxation was to be required; and if this opinion be meant merely to express that assemblies for the former purpose were not in general so numerous as

<sup>25</sup> Eadmer Hist. I. p. 26, 27.

<sup>26</sup> Writ of 6<sup>th</sup> John apud Lord's 1st Report as printed by order of the House of Commons, p. 58.

<sup>27</sup> Lord's report on the dignity of a peer.

those summoned to enforce some additional burden, there seems no reason to dispute its accuracy. But many councils were attended by the inferior tenants, which were convened rather for judicial than legislative discussion. It ought also to be recollected, that as before the conquest all the landowners of the county were members of the county court, so after that period the attendance was not confined to the immediate tenants of the crown; and when representatives of counties were summoned to parliament, their election was not confined to such tenants, but lay with all the freeholders.<sup>28</sup> Further, if to obtain a seat in the wittenagemote the possession of land was sufficient, it may not unnaturally be supposed that the holding of land by knight-service might in feudal times be looked upon as a good enough title to admission to the more important and general meetings of the great council, without regard to the superior of whom the land was held; the co-right attached to the proprietorship of territorial property being the result alike of Saxon and Norman policy; the restriction to tenants by military service being the consequence of feudal prejudices alone.

But unquestionably there were often persons in the great council who did not fall under either of these descriptions. And it seems therefore most probable that for a considerable period, there were no definite regulations as to the mode in which a council should be composed; it being always understood, however, that the tenants *in capite* had a right to be summoned, while the presence of others was in a great measure variable, and dependent upon the inclinations of the monarch. Such a supposition appears to be most consistent with contemporary evidence; and one part of it (the right of the crown-tenants) receives the strongest confirmation from a provision of Magna Charta; for it was not till its promulgation, that any distinction was attempted to be made even in the *mode* of summoning them to parliament. Before that time it would appear, that each of them was by law entitled to a special writ; but the increase of their number, perhaps some vague notion of the introduction of a representative system, or the desire of the greater nobles to elevate themselves above the inferior vassals, was the cause of a provision, that while the greater barons should be specially summoned, a general summons only should be directed to the lesser barons through the sheriff of the county. What the distinction between those two classes of persons was, is a point by no means ascertained.<sup>29</sup>

Lord Lyttelton<sup>30</sup> and others have contended, that while the tenants in chief of the crown were entitled to appear each of them on his own account, the other freeholders of the kingdom, comprehending all who held of the barons, either by knight-service or free soccage, all the possessors of allodial estates, and all the free inhabitants of cities and burghs appeared by representatives. This proposition is far too broadly stated. But though the practice of representation was undoubtedly not so constant as this eminent author would have it; yet, if such a practice

<sup>28</sup> Edin. Review, vol. xxvi. 344.—Report on Gothic Records, 1800, p. 60.—Hundred Rolls i. p. 25. (as there cited.)

<sup>29</sup> Seldon imagined that the title of greater barons was conferred upon the old tenants or chief of the crown—that of lesser barons upon those who had become so by the gift of escheated baronies. Hody thought that the major barons were the king's tenants—the minor, the vassals of some great subject.

<sup>30</sup> Lyttelton's Hist. vol. ii. 274. et seq. vol. iv. 94. et seq.



had been introduced for the first time by the earl of Leicester in the 49th of Henry III., as is generally believed, it is reasonable to conclude that it would have excited more observation among the historians of the period, and occasioned greater opposition. It must indeed be admitted, that there are various instances in the earlier history of the kingdom, which show, not that a representative system was in use to the full extent for which Lord Lyttelton has argued, but that on important occasions it had been partially introduced. Two instances of representation have already been mentioned, one of them in a council of William the Conqueror, only four years after the conquest, at which twelve persons attended from each county; and the other at the council of Clarendon, if we may suppose that "the older men of the kingdom" there mentioned, were intended to represent the freeholders. But the most decisive examples of the gradual rise of a settled plan of representation, are to be found after the date of John's great charter. Immediately before that event, however, and in the 15th year of John's reign, writs were issued to the sheriffs of the different counties,<sup>31</sup> directing them to require the presence of four knights out of their respective counties, as a council to be holden at Oxford. It is remarkable, that the knights appear to have been summoned for the purpose of deliberation alone, while the barons were directed to attend with arms for the performance of military service,—a circumstance which points out the barons as the crown's tenants in chief, from whom such services could be exacted, and the knights as the representatives of the other freeholders. From them John, perhaps, expected assistance in the struggle in which he was then engaged; but that struggle ended on the publication of the great charter. That these knights were elected in the county courts may be inferred from this, that the writ issued by the king from Runnymede, directed twelve knights to be chosen by each county, in the first county court, to ascertain the bad customs which were to be abolished according to the charter.<sup>32</sup> Other instances of representation are mentioned below.

<sup>31</sup> Fœd. i. 117.

<sup>32</sup> In the 4th of Henry III. we have a writ, directing two knights to be chosen by every county for the purpose of assessing an aid granted by the great council. An election, even with that limited object, does not appear unimportant in tracing the first rude beginnings of a representative government; for, as these knights not only collected the tax, but made a report of grievances to the king, their introduction into parliament itself was only an additional and easy step. In the 7th of Henry III. again, every sheriff was ordered to inquire, by means of twelve knights, what were the rights of the crown in his county on the day on which the war began between John and his barons. Lingard, ii. 222.—Brady, ii. App. No. 149.—In the 8th of Henry III. two knights, elected in the county court, were sent from each county to the great council. Carte, ii. 250.—In the 10th of same king, we meet with writs directing the sheriffs of certain counties to send four representatives for each county, to attend the king and the magistrates at Lincoln, touching certain questions which had arisen between the sheriffs and freeholders as to the charter of liberties. In 1246, (30<sup>th</sup> Hen. III.) the burgesses of the Cinque Ports are expressly said to have been present. In the 38th of Henry III., writs were issued to the sheriffs of counties to cause two knights elected by each county, to attend the common council, in the name of and for the county, at Westminster, to consult as to an aid to be granted to the king. This has been regarded as the strongest instance of representation previously to the 49th Henry III. But the anxious direction that the persons elected were to be endowed with the above-mentioned authority, and similar expressions in the writs of Edward I., requiring the election of knights for each county, "with authority to act for the county, that the business might not fail for want of such authority," have been supposed to prove that the custom of representation had not at all events been uniform; and, moreover, that in all probability it had not been introduced by express law, else the authority would have been a necessary consequence of election. On the other hand, it must be noticed, that this parliament was called by

Looking, indeed, to the change in the state of property which had taken place, and to the facts mentioned in our last note, we have strong grounds for supposing that, long before the end of the reign of Henry III., representations of counties, at all events, had occasionally appeared in parliament. Many of the most powerful families in the country held of the king, not as in right of his crown, but of some escheat; and other families of considerable importance were vassals of the king's tenants-in-chief. If the former remained mere tenants of the manor which had devolved to the king, and the other were confined to the courts of their lords, without either having the right of attendance at the great councils, we should have met with complaints of the preference given to the smaller immediate tenants of the crown. That the crown-vassals by escheat were not entitled to a seat in parliament is very improbable; for no distinction is made between them and the other tenants *in capite*, on that clause of the great charter relating to the granting of aids,—an omission which could hardly have occurred if any such distinction had existed. But the personal attendance of so large a body was impossible; and there is nothing more likely than that an approach should have been made to the representation by them before any express enactments were made regarding it.

If the representation of counties before the end of Henry the Third's reign be involved in doubt, that of cities and boroughs may be considered more questionable, though supported by the authority of some eminent names. It is true, that in the Saxon times, the towns were often places of considerable strength and importance, and that London in particular had a great share in the politics of that troubled age. From Domesday it appears, that many burghs included among their inhabitants persons of the rank of thanes, and owed military service to the king, and that the burgesses held their lands and tenements in heritage. The conquest, indeed, materially affected their prosperity, but they gradually recovered it; and they acted a conspicuous part in the obtaining of Magna Charta, and the barons' wars of Henry III.

the queen, and Richard, earl of Cornwall, during the king's absence at Guienne; and it is therefore extremely improbable that such an election of knights of the shire would have been ordered had that election been an entire innovation. Carte, ii. 251.—Four years afterwards (42<sup>o</sup> Henry III.) four knights from each county, attended a meeting of parliament, as appears from writs remaining for payment of their expenses. It was at this parliament, which met at Oxford, that the famous provisions of Oxford were adopted, by which the power of the crown was virtually extinguished; and it is worthy of remark, that the Oxford parliament was convened in order that persons might attend with power to consent to a general aid: a previous one convoked at London, and composed of the 'Proceres et fideles regni,' not conceiving itself to have sufficient authority to impose it. Fœd. i. 370.—It may, therefore, be inferred that the greater barons, at all events, perhaps even the tenants-in-chief of the crown—for the expression might include them all—had now begun to doubt their right to grant an aid in the absence of delegates authorised to act for the body of the freeholders, and it seems fair to conclude, that if some kind of representation had not been previously known, there would have been some directions in regard to the manner of choosing the persons to whom such powers were to be committed. Again, in 1261, (45<sup>o</sup> Henry III.) the barons summoned three knights from every county, to attend at St Alban's, and consult on the affairs of the realm; but the king annulled the writs, and ordered the knights to come to Windsor to be present at the intended conference between him and the barons. Lingard, iii. 174.—Brady, ii. App. No. 202.—Some instances have already been mentioned of the attendance of the inferior clergy in parliament, and it appears from the annals of Burton, sub ann. 1255, that the whole body of the clergy sat by representatives in the 39th Henry III. History supplies other examples, and none of them are mentioned by the writers of the time, all of them ecclesiastics, as a novelty—a strong proof, certainly, that the practice of representation was not altogether unknown, long before the end of Henry the Third's reign.

But whatever the growing importance of the burghs, it is difficult to see on what ground, before they were incorporated, they could have claimed admission to the great council. As on the continent, before the gift of charters of incorporation, the towns were generally ruled by a chief elected by the sovereign or over-lord, to whom the appellation of *Burggraf* or *Chatelain* was given, so in England, those belonging to the crown were under the administration of the king's reeve or bailiff. The twelfth century is the first epoch of civic enfranchisement. London got its charter from Henry I. on the day of his accession in 1100, and had the priority of all the other cities of England: the most ancient communities of France owe their rise to Louis VI. in 1109:<sup>33</sup> those of Flanders were created in the last half of the same century: the charters of the towns of Brabant, Holland, and Zealand, are still more recent. The incorporated communities of Castile had indeed an earlier origin. The charter of Leon was granted in 1020: Carrion, Slanes, Naxasa, Sahagun, Salamanca, and other towns acquired similar privileges in the course of the same century.<sup>34</sup> But even after the rise of corporate burghs in England, the aids of the burgesses in ancient demesne were certainly not imposed by the parliament or great council. Under Henry I., and in the beginning of the reign of Henry II., the tallages imposed upon them were accounted for by the sheriffs, without any indication of the authority under which they were levied.<sup>35</sup> But during the reign of Henry II., and for a considerable time afterwards, they were solicited or extorted by the justices on their iters. There was no motive therefore to convoke the burghs for the purpose of obtaining money, and if delegates from them attended parliament at all, it could obviously have been only on extraordinary occasions.

The analogy, too, of other feudal monarchies—though such an argument is by no means conclusive—is hostile to the opinion of those writers who argue for an early representation of the cities in the great council. In France, they were present for the first time, at the estates of the kingdom, about the year 1300:<sup>36</sup> in Germany, it is said, the free cities did not appear at the diet till 1356: in Flanders, celebrated for the greatness and wealth of its towns, they had no representation till after the year 1300. The practice of Castile, whose constitution was at that time founded on a more liberal basis than that of any other country in Europe, is perhaps of more authority. Deputies from the Castilian towns formed a part of the cortes for the first time in 1169: and it was not till 1188, that they became constant and necessary members of these general assemblies.<sup>37</sup> It must not, however, be forgotten, that in the writ issued in the 49th of Henry III., enjoining the attendance of representatives of burghs, only two, the cities of York and Lincoln, are particularly mentioned,—a separate writ appears to have been sent to London and the Cinque Ports,—and then there is a general direction '*ceteris burgis Angliæ*' to attend by two of their burgesses. This vague mention of them has been urged by Lord Lyttelton, as a strong argument, that the burghs which had been in use to send members to parliament were well-known: but this inference is doubtful, for the utmost that can be asserted, is an occasional appearance of their representatives in the earlier periods of our history, not that constant attendance

<sup>33</sup> Recueil des ordonn. des Rois de France, xi. 250.

<sup>34</sup> Hallam's Middle Ages, ii. 9.

<sup>35</sup> Madox Exchequer, i. 694.

<sup>36</sup> Pasquier Recherches.

<sup>37</sup> Hallam, ii. 29.



which would have been necessary to point out clearly the burghs entitled to the privilege. It would seem indeed, that representatives of London attended the council which transferred the crown to the empress Maud, during the captivity of Stephen;<sup>38</sup> that in the time of Richard I., its mayor and principal citizens concurred with the barons in deposing the bishop of Ely from the office of chancellor; and that the burgesses of the Cinque Ports attended a council held on the 30th of Henry III. But such examples do not warrant us in concluding that a system of representation was established, though they may be regarded as an occasional practice naturally leading to its full introduction.

When men were accustomed to judge of institutions by their antiquity, rather than their usefulness, it is not surprising that the different questions which have been shortly considered, should have been discussed with much acrimony. In the present times, they will generally be looked upon as objects of historical curiosity, neither affecting the settlement of any political right, nor requiring the exhibition of any political predilection. At all events, this is clear that in the earl of Leicester's famous parliament in 1265, (49<sup>o</sup> Henry III.) amongst with two knights from each county, representatives were summoned from various cities. This innovation, if it was one, was not abandoned; and though in some parliaments in the beginning of the reign of Edward I., representatives of burghs may not have been summoned, we have unquestionable evidence of their occasional presence at least, even during that period; and after the 21st year of his reign, they formed an undoubted part of the parliament of the kingdom. As to the character of the man to whom the first formal introduction of the principle of representation is owing, there is conflicting testimony. Leicester's ambition may have been greater than his patriotism; his opposition to Henry more ardent, than his political views profound. The provisions of Oxford, by which he contrived to vest the whole executive and legislative power in the hands of a small number of his partizans, was a dangerous usurpation; and the reforms, in expectation of which the nation yielded to those enactments, were not only long delayed, but when at last brought forward were of little moment. Yet we have no sufficient evidence that Leicester entertained the daring views with which he has sometimes been charged, and it ought to be remembered, that though a foreigner, he reached the highest pitch of popularity in a nation to whom, at that time, foreign influence was peculiarly odious: that in support of his government he ventured to appeal to the representatives of a class of men generally supposed to have been more subservient to the crown than friendly to the nobles; and that his death excited the lamentations of the English people, by whom his memory was long cherished with peculiar veneration.

The manners of the people were improved, and the tone of society was elevated, along with the advance of public liberty. During the three reigns after the conquest, the instances of wanton ferocity are numerous and revolting. Henry I., though more polished than his father or brother, inflicted the most barbarous punishments upon his enemies. To deprive them of eye-sight, was his usual mode of revenge;<sup>39</sup> and some historians have related that he subjected his unfortunate

<sup>38</sup> Malmesbury, 106.

<sup>39</sup> Ord. Vital, 880, 881.

brother, Robert of Normandy, to that cruel operation. Stephen was generous and liberal, and displayed his generosity even amid the miseries of civil war. But it was the amiable and attractive character of Henry II., that had the greatest influence in refining the nation. Peaceful, yet brave; just, without severity; and distinguished for talents and noble sentiments, he presented a happy model for their imitation. Learning ventured from the cloisters of the monks,—wandering minstrels circulated the rude traditional poetry of the age,—the courtesies of chivalry were more in observance,—and the voluminous poems of the Anglo-Norman versifiers, however deficient in the graces of poetry, were eagerly perused, and in such an age must undoubtedly have been instructive. The fabulous British history of Jeffrey of Monmouth was published before Henry's accession; but Boece, whose historical poem still remains, was befriended by that monarch, and names him affectionately as his patron. Richard I. embarked in the crusades with ardour, where his brilliant exploits acquired for him a splendid reputation which has descended even to our own times. These romantic adventures to the Holy Land were of themselves well-fitted to raise the tone of national feeling: the knightly qualities of Richard, his encouragement of poetry, and his own poetical efforts in the Provençal tongue, gave that feeling a fresh impulse.

It was fortunate that the bonds of unity had been drawn closer, that the people had risen in civilization, and that there was a greater inclination to strengthen the foundations of public freedom, or of their own assumptions as a body, among the nobles, than to arrogate individual independence of the crown, when the distracted government of the weak and treacherous John, and his no less weak and faithless, but more inoffensive son, presented the most favourable opportunities for checking the growth of the royal prerogatives. Other causes, indeed, besides the weakness of these two monarchs, were acting to the same end. The civil war in the time of Stephen,—the misfortunes of Henry II. at the close of his reign,—the exertions of Richard I. to obtain a sum sufficient to defray the expenses of his crusade,—the amount of his ransom,—the loss of Normandy in the time of John,—his mismanagement,—and the profusion of Henry III. to his favourites,—the increased expense of defending the foreign dominions after the loss of Normandy,—had greatly diminished the crown's ordinary revenues, and rendered the sovereign more dependant upon the aids which he could obtain from his subjects. The demand for supplies was soon met with the statement of grievances; and the reign of Henry III. is full of importunate requests by the king for assistance, and frequently as preremptory refusals by the great council to grant it. But these were not the only causes which, happily for England, prevented any attempt on the part of the nobles individually at independence. Though the Conqueror granted large estates to his followers, yet by a wise policy he took care that they were divided and situated in different parts of the kingdom. No great territorial power, therefore, could be formed; while, on the other hand, the partial continuance of the county and hundred courts were a still farther restraint upon the local jurisdictions of the feudal lords. Had these courts retained all the power which they possessed in Saxon times, it might be amusing to conjecture in what form the constitution would ultimately have been developed. Perhaps, if the king's courts had not



gradually trenched upon their authority, the uncertainty of their decisions, and their defects as courts of justice, might have been favourable to the increase of the baronial jurisdiction, and aristocratic power. As it happened while the county-court especially preserved many of its privileges, and thus formed a bulwark against the spread of feudal relationships, the judicial functions were gradually usurped by the royal tribunals, and a new and more effectual check was imposed upon the rise of territorial jurisdiction.

One of the principal reasons for the decline of the county-courts, as courts for the administration of justice, is undoubtedly to be found in the separation of the ecclesiastical and civil jurisdictions, which took place in the reign of the Conqueror. Previously to the conquest, the clergy sat along with the other freeholders; and by their superior knowledge and judicial skill in a great measure kept up the reputation of these tribunals, which rapidly declined after the clergy were withdrawn. But their withdrawal was attended by other pernicious consequences. The clergy gradually assumed powers inconsistent with good government, and removed themselves from the control of the lay jurisdictions. Their ambition rose by concession, and for a long time the ablest of our monarchs struggled unsuccessfully against the Roman see. The admission of a legate into the kingdom, which was strenuously objected to by the Conqueror and William Rufus, was not long resisted. In the reign of Henry I., the question of investitures was agitated, and the demands of the pope for a time evaded. But Henry II. with all his power and popularity, was subjected to much humiliation in his contest with the papacy; and John, after proceeding to extremes, yielded with his usual pusillanimity, nay, actually surrendered his kingdom into the hands of the pope, from whom he again received it to be held as a fief of the holy see. At the same time, it must be noticed, that the claims of ecclesiastical superiority were sooner and more boldly met in England than in many other of the European kingdoms; and that the clergy themselves were generally disposed to foster the spirit of liberty among the people, and not unfrequently appear as the champions of their rights in the deliberations of parliament. It may have been that they found a more obstinate resistance in the sovereign, than among the body of the nation to their encroachments. But they showed the same inclination in the reign of John, even after the pope had absolved him from the oath which he had taken to maintain the great charter; and in the time of Henry III., many of the monks and inferior clergy were zealous adherents of Leicester and the barons.

On reviewing the history of the period then, to which this introductory chapter relates, it is very obvious that though we meet with much arbitrary conduct, the government was not founded on the principles of a despotic monarchy. The charters, too, which were granted by all the Norman and Plantagenet princes, are so many compacts between the sovereign and the people. If their frequent renewal be a proof of the arbitrary attempts of the government, it indicates also the determination of the people or the barons, to impose effectual checks upon the royal authority. We have seen that for some time after the conquest, the principal object of popular desire was the revival of the old laws of Edward the Confessor; and the charters of William Rufus, Henry I. and Stephen—the last more unequivocally than its predecessors—professed



to yield on this head to the loud petitions of the people, which had originated in the hatred of Norman oppression. In the reign of Henry II., whose charter did not contain so broad a renewal of the Confessor's laws, the condition of the English was ameliorated; the two hostile races had coalesced into one nation, and henceforward the cry for the laws of Edward was forgotten in the more rational attempt to extort concessions from the sovereign adapted to the changed relations of society. But after all, the whole of these charters, including Magna Charta itself, did not so much impose new restraints upon the royal prerogative, as declare the state of the law at the time they were respectively promulgated. By the charter of Henry I., for example, the incident of wardship was abandoned, and that of marriage asserted only in a very modified form: whereas in John's charter—commonly called Magna Charta—the former is conceded, and the other extended in a great degree. Such variations are not to be explained by any difference in the character of the monarchs. There is no comparison between the able and politic Henry, and the despised pusillanimous John, yielding to the dictation of the haughty barons. But the apparent anomaly is resolved when we consider that the barons by whom Magna Charta was extorted, had submitted to these feudal burdens, because they were more than compensated by the same incidents which they, in their turn, levied from their vassals after, with the most unsparing cupidity: and that the Great Charter, therefore, only adopted and defined the custom, which circumstances had introduced. Had that charter not contained the provision 'that every liberty and custom which the king had granted to his tenants, as far as concerned him, should be observed by the clergy and laity towards their tenants, as far as concerned them'—a clause which a party depending upon the popularity of their measures did not dare to omit—we should, in all likelihood, have found the incidents of wardship and marriage of the crown-tenants greatly restricted, if not abolished altogether. There can, indeed, be no question that though Magna Charta contains some provisions in favour of the people, it chiefly consulted the interests of the barons. Its reputation has been acquired by the capacity of adaptation in some of its clauses, to the necessities of a more advanced stage of society; and by its having been the first great example of resistance to monarchical pretension. But the selfish spirit of the feudal oligarchy was displayed by their consenting to the omission in the charter of any restriction on tallage, a tax which weighed upon the people, and an abatement of which was proposed in the original stipulations, which the confederated barons steadfastly insisted upon the proposed reduction of scutage, a burden which pressed upon themselves. The formal recognition, however, of the right of at least a portion of the people to be consulted in the imposition of taxation, was an invaluable concession which could be applied to more beneficial purposes than the support of aristocratical domination. That clause, indeed, was omitted in the four charters of Henry III., though in the first of them, issued not by authority of the great council, but of the barons of the king's party, it was reserved for future consideration. The consideration was not necessary in Henry's reign, for the clause in John's charter remained in full operation; and parliament, acting upon its undoubted right, frequently refused the aids which the king requested. Had Henry hesitated to acknowledge that right he would soon have been

forced to the most unqualified admission of its existence—an admission to which Edward I., great and powerful as he was, found it necessary to submit.

## I. POLITICAL SERIES.

### William the Conqueror.

BORN A. D. 1024.—DIED A. D. 1087.

THE witan had assembled in London immediately on the news of the defeat and death of Harold, and by unanimous choice placed the etheling Edgar, the grandson of Edmond Ironside, on the throne. Had real union marked the counsels of the Anglo-Saxon chieftains, their country might yet have spurned from its soil the foot of the Norman invader, for an armed force that filled seven hundred ships was still in the channel, waiting only a convenient opportunity to take the Normans in their rear,<sup>1</sup> and the country was still full of men who only wanted leaders to renew the array of Hastings against the further progress of the enemy. William's victory also had been dearly purchased, and the slowness and caution of his movements sufficiently indicated the sense he entertained of the magnitude and difficulty of the enterprise yet before him. But secret dissatisfaction prevailed among the English nobility; and among the disaffected towards the new order of things were Edwin and Morcar, the military commanders of Mercia and Northumberland, who drew off their forces to their respective provinces, and awaited the issue of their country's fate in a state of inactivity. The defection of these two powerful earls left the capital almost defenceless; but William now preferred a more cautious line of policy than the desperate game he had so lately played might have indicated. Instead of instantly laying siege to the metropolis, he passed the Thames into Berkshire, and encamped at Wallingford. By this movement he placed himself betwixt the capital and any forces which the earls of Mercia and Northumberland might have been at last prevailed on to send to its relief; it also afforded him time for negotiation with any party that might be disposed to offer it. The people of Kent had already proffered fealty to him, on condition of their province remaining as free after the conquest as it had been before it;<sup>2</sup> and their example was soon followed by various powerful individuals. Stigand, the metropolitan bishop, whose influence had mainly contributed to the election of Edgar, was among the first to discover the utter hopelessness of the cause, and to swear fealty to the Norman;<sup>3</sup> Edwin and Morcar soon afterwards presented themselves for the like purpose; and finally a deputation from the citizens of London, and the clergy of the kingdom, made offer of the crown to the Conqueror. William, at first affected to receive the proposal that he should assume the title of king of England with indifference and even dislike; but his Normans easily prevailed upon him to dismiss his scruples, and the ap-

<sup>1</sup> Guil. Pictav. 201.—Ord. Vital. 500.

<sup>2</sup> Chron. Will. Thorn. p. 1786.

<sup>3</sup> See an array of authorities quoted by Lingard on the disputed question as to Stigand's conduct at this crisis, vol. 1. p. 385.

proaching Christmas-day was fixed for the coronation. Westminster abbey was the place appointed for the ceremony. It was prepared and decorated, to use the language of the Saxon chronicle, "as when, with the free suffrages of the best men of England, the king of their choice came and presented himself, there to receive the investment of the power which they had confided to him." But the best and noblest adornment of a coronation, a free and loyal people, was wanting on the present occasion; and before the new sovereign dared to present himself among his English subjects, he ordered the streets to be lined and the abbey surrounded with bands of his Norman soldiery. The ceremony was performed by Aldred, archbishop of York, for Stigand had already fallen into disgrace. That prelate put the question to the English, the bishop of Constance to the Normans, whether they were willing that William should be their sovereign.<sup>4</sup> The English expressed their assent with loud shouts, which the Norman soldiery without mistook for the signal of tumult in the assembly; and thirsting for plunder, the foreign troops immediately began to fire the city and attack the inhabitants. It was in the midst of the fearful tumult thus occasioned that William received investiture of the crown of England from the hands of Aldred, assisted by a band of trembling priests of both nations. The service was completed with precipitation; but the Conqueror took the usual oath of the Saxon kings, with this addition, that he would govern his new subjects as well and justly as they had been governed by the best of his predecessors on the English throne.<sup>5</sup>

William had hitherto been called 'the Bastard;' from this period he received the name of 'the Conqueror,' a term which in that age did not necessarily involve the idea of a subjugated people, but was often employed to denote a person who had vindicated for himself a just right. Neither was the term 'bastard' of such opprobrious import at that time as it has since become. William gave it to himself in many of his letters.<sup>6</sup> The first policy of the new sovereign was liberal and wise; he distinguished his coronation by magnificent largesses; admonished his barons to treat the natives with moderation and equity; affixed severe punishment to every species of insult, rapine, and assault; and exhorted his English and Norman subjects generally to mutual good will and inter-alliance. To the etheling Edgar also he behaved with great generosity and show of affection, admitting him into the number of his intimate friends, and investing him with an estate not unfitting the descendant of an ancient race of kings. Still he found it necessary to place his chief reliance on the attachment of his own Normans, whose presence in his newly-acquired territory he could only secure by grants of land to be holden by the tenure of military service. For this purpose the royal demesnes were freely sacrificed; and we have the unsuspecting testimony of one of the sons of the Conqueror,<sup>7</sup> that when these failed, the English were dispossessed in great numbers to make room for Norman holders of the soil. One alone amongst all the warriors in the

<sup>4</sup> The Norman historians clearly allow that William took the throne by election not by conquest. *Guil. Pict.* puts the question "whether they would *consent*,"—"an consentient eum sibi dominum coronari," p. 205.—*Ord. Vital.* has it, "whether they would *grant*,"—"an concederent Gulielmum regnare super se." p. 503.

<sup>5</sup> *Chron. Lamb. ad. ann 1066.*—*Ord. Vital.* 503.

<sup>6</sup> *Spelm. Archaiol.* 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ricardus Nigellus, Richard Lenoir or Noirot, bishop of Ely in the 12th century.



Conqueror's train would accept of no part of the spoils of the vanquished. He was named Guilbert son of Richard. He claimed neither lands, nor gold, nor women. He said that he accompanied his liege lord into England because such was his duty; that he was not to be tempted by stolen property, but was content to return to his own Norman patrimony, which, though small, sufficed for all his wants.<sup>8</sup> Another precaution which William found it necessary to adopt, was the establishment of garrisons in fortified ports throughout the kingdom. The presence and conduct of these bodies of soldiery greatly augmented the dissatisfaction of the country.

Within the short space of three months after his coronation William returned to Normandy, leaving his seneschal William Fitz Osborne, and his half-brother Odo, bishop of Bayeux, regents of England in his absence. His retinue consisted not only of many of the companions of his victory, but also many English thanes and prelates, whom he affected to honour by placing among his attendants, but who were in reality only present as hostages for the tranquillity of their countrymen during William's absence. Among these were Edgar, Stigand, Fritheric abbot of St Albans, Edwin, Morcar, and Waltheof son of Siward.<sup>9</sup> William's chaplain and biographer has left it on record, that the royal retinue brought with them more gold and silver into Normandy on this occasion than had ever before been seen in all Gaul. Speaking of the riches brought from England, he says: "That land far surpasses Gaul in abundance of the precious metals. If in fertility it may be termed the granary of Ceres, in riches it should be called the treasury of Arabia. The English women excel in the use of the needle, and in the embroidery of gold: the men in every species of elegant workmanship. Moreover the best artists of Germany reside amongst them, and merchants import into their island the most valuable foreign productions."<sup>10</sup> The extreme beauty, and the long flowing hair<sup>11</sup> of the young English, also captivated the admiration of the Normans. But while William was making this display of his newly acquired wealth and grandeur to his ancient subjects, he was putting the allegiance of his new ones to a severe proof. Five months had passed away without any indication on his part of returning to England. Meanwhile the rapacity of his soldiery, and the apathy of his vice-gerents, were fast driving the English into exile or open insurrection. One body of the natives bade adieu to their country, and entered into the service of the Grecian emperor, under whose banners they fought in every action from the siege of Durazzo to the final retreat of their hated enemies the Normans, from the walls of Larissa.<sup>12</sup> Another party sent deputies to Denmark to offer to Svenio Tiuffveskeg, a crown which had already graced the brows of two of his ancestors, Canute and Hardicanute. In the east the people of Kent broke out into actual rebellion; while in Herefordshire, a young Saxon chief, aided by the Welsh, raised the standard of independence, and drove the Normans beyond the Severn. These proceedings roused William from his supineness. He hastened across the channel, and in

<sup>8</sup> Ord. Vital. p. 606.

<sup>9</sup> Guil. Pict. 209.

<sup>10</sup> Ib. 211.

<sup>11</sup> Long hair was a mark of birth with the northern nations.

<sup>12</sup> The descendants of these men for many generations served in the body-guard of the emperors. "They and their heirs," says Ordericus, "served faithfully the sacred empire; and they remain till now among the Thracians with great honour, dear to the people, the senate, and the sovereign." p. 508.

a series of successful engagements reduced the malcontents to external submission. But the spirit of resistance was still alive. The citizens of Durham, aided by the surrounding peasantry, rose in a body and massacred the Norman, Robert de Cumin and his followers, on whom the king had conferred the ancient earldom of Cospatric; the citizens of York followed the example of the Durhamites, and rose upon the Norman garrison; and Edgar, who, with his mother and sisters, and many 'good men,' as the Saxon chronicle has it, had taken refuge at the court of Malcolm of Scotland, hastened to make common cause with his countrymen. The sword was now unsheathed between the king and his people, and a spirit of deadly enmity henceforth marked the conduct of his English and Norman subjects towards each other. To add to William's embarrassment, the sons of Harold, who had taken refuge with Dermot, one of the kings of Ireland, threatened the island on one side with a fleet of sixty-one ships, while Canute son of Sveno of Denmark, sister's son of Canute the Great, with a much larger armament hovered off the other. The king was hunting in the forest of Dean when news were brought him that all Northumbria was in revolt, and that his strong city of York had been carried by assault and reduced to ashes. In the first transports of his wrath, he swore to render Northumbria a desert, and the dreadful oath was mercilessly performed. Marching against the insurgents he defeated them at all points, and left the country between York and Durham without a single habitation, the refuge only of wild beasts and robbers.<sup>13</sup> From causes which we cannot now detail the Danish armament quitted the island without a struggle, and thus relieved William from his most formidable difficulty. The English leaders now lost hope. Edgar, with the bishop of Durham, sailed to Scotland; Cospatric solicited and obtained pardon; Waltheof, whose matchless valour had long supported the spirits of his countrymen, and even extorted the admiration of the Normans themselves, visited the king on the banks of the Tees, and received from him the hand of his niece, Judith, in marriage, with his former earldoms of Northampton and Huntingdom. But Malcolm of Scotland continued to perpetrate a series of the most desolating ravages on the northern parts of William's kingdom, and by his marriage with Margaret, the sister of Edgar, drew closer his bands of alliance with the Saxons and their expatriated prince.<sup>14</sup> The heroic struggle maintained by Hereward Le Wake, the empecinado of his day, will be better detailed in a separate article. The fortunes of the English church during this calamitous season will also be treated of in the ecclesiastical section of this period.

In our introductory remarks on the period of English history, we have reviewed at some length the consequences of the Norman conquest, and the system of things which grew out of that event. We shall not recapitulate; but before proceeding with our rapid outline of the Conqueror's transactions, we may here present the reader with a few details selected from Thierry, in themselves perhaps scarcely worthy of notice, but which may assist the reader to picture in his imagination some of the scenes of the conquest, and fix on his memory a few curious traits of the manners and habits of that age. England, after the conquest,

<sup>13</sup> Hoveden, 451.—Ord. Vital. 514.

<sup>14</sup> Simeon, 200.—Flor. 636. Of the eight children of this marriage three were successively kings of Scotland, one was queen, and one was mother to a queen of England.

presented the singular spectacle of a native population with a foreign sovereign, a foreign hierarchy, and a foreign aristocracy. For a time William succeeded in restraining the rapacity of his followers, but he soon found himself obliged to yield to their incessant demands, and to rob the people for the gratification of their tyrannical superiors. At Pevensey, for instance, beginning with the first corner of land on which the foreigner set foot, the Norman soldiers shared amongst them the houses of the vanquished. The city of Dover, half-consumed by fire, was given to the bishop of Bayeux, who distributed the houses among his followers. Raoul de Courbespine received three of them, together with a poor woman's field; Guillaume, son of Geoffrey, had also three, together with the old town-house; one rich Englishman put himself under the protection of Norman Gualtier, who received him as a tributary, and another became a serf-de-corps on the soil of his own field. In the province of Suffolk, a Norman chief appropriated to himself the lands of a Saxon woman named Edith the Fair, perhaps the same 'swan-necked Edith' who had been mistress to Harold. The city of Norwich was reserved entire as the Conqueror's private domain; it had paid to the Saxon kings a tax of 30 livres 20 sols, but William exacted from it an annual contribution of 70 livres, a valuable horse, 100 livres for his queen, and 20 livres for the governor. A female juggler, named Adeline, figures on the partition rolls as having received fee and salary from Roger, one of the Norman counts. Three Saxon warriors associated together as brethren-in-arms, possessed a manor near St Alban's, which they had received from the abbot of that establishment, on condition of their defending it by the sword if necessary. They faithfully discharged their engagements, only abandoning their domain when overpowered by numbers, and returning again after a short space to assail, at the expense of their lives, the Norman knight who had settled himself down on their property. After the siege of Nottingham, Guillaume Peverel received, as his share of the conquest, fifty-five manors in the neighbourhood of the town, and the houses of forty-eight English tradesmen, twelve warriors, and eight husbandmen. A large tract of land at the eastern point of Yorkshire was given to Dreux Bruère, a captain of Flemish auxiliaries. This man was married to a relative of the Conqueror's, whom he killed in a fit of anger; but before the report of her death had got abroad, he hastened to the king, and begged that he would give him money in exchange for his lands as he wished to return into Flanders. William unsuspectingly ordered the sum which the Fleming asked to be paid to him, and it was not until after his departure that the real cause of it was discovered. Euder de Champagne had married the Conqueror's sister by the mother's side. On the birth of a son, he remarked to the king that his possession, the isle of Holderness was not fertile, producing nothing but oats, and begged that he would grant him a portion of land capable of bearing wheat wherewith the child might be fed. William heard the request with due patience, and gave him the entire town of Bytham in the province of Lincoln. From the time that William's footing in England became sure, not young soldiers alone, but whole families of men, women, and children, emigrated from Gaul to seek their fortunes in the country of the English. Geoffrey de Chaumont gave to his niece Denis all the lands which he possessed in the country of Blois, and then departed to push new



fortunes for himself in England. "He afterwards returned to Chaumont," says the historian, "with an immense treasure, large sums of money, a great number of articles of rarity, and the titles of possessions of more than one great and rich domain." William gave the county of Chester to Hugh d'Avranche, surnamed Le Loup, who built a fort at Rhuddlan, where he fought a murderous battle with the Welsh, the memory of which is still preserved in a mournful Welsh air called Morfa-Rhuddlan. Le Loup invited over from Normandy one of his old friends named Nigel, or Lenoir. Lenoir brought with him five brothers to share his fortunes. He received for himself the town of Halton near the river Mersey, and was made Le Loup's constable and hereditary marshal, that is, wherever the count of Chester might war, Lenoir and his heirs were bound to march at the head of the whole army in going forth to battle, and to be the last in returning. They had, as their share of the booty, taken from the Welsh in plundering expeditions, the cattle of all kinds. Their servants enjoyed the privilege of buying in the market at Chester before any one else, except the count's servants. They had the control of the roads and streets during fairs, the tolls of all markets within the limits of Halton, and entire freedom from tax and toll, excepting on salt and horses. Hondard, the first of the five brothers, became to Lenoir nearly what Lenoir was to Count Hugh, and received for his services the lands of Weston and Ashton. He had also all the bulls taken from the Welsh, and the best ox as a recompense for the man-at-arms who carried his banner. The other brothers received domains from the constable; and the fifth, who was a priest, obtained the church of Runcone. These transactions,—all the sharing of possessions and offices which took place in the province of Chester between the Norman governor, his first lieutenant, and the lieutenant's five companions,—give a true and faithful idea, says Thierry, of numerous transactions of the same kind which were taking place at the same time in every province of England.<sup>15</sup> It was thus that "the herdsmen of Normandy, and the weavers of Flanders, with a little courage and good fortune, soon became in England men of consequence,—illustrious barons; that the man who had crossed the sea with the quilted cassock, and black wooden bow of the foot-soldier, now appeared to the astonished eyes of the new recruits who had come after him, mounted on a war-horse, and invested with the military baldrick." Would you know, says an old roll in the French language, what are the names of the great men who came over the sea with the Conqueror,—with Guillaume Bâtard à la grande viguer? Here are their surnames as we find them written, but without their Christian names being prefixed, for they are often wanting, and often changed. They are Mandeville and Dandeville, Aufreville and Domfreville, Bouteville and Estouteville, Mohun and Bohun, Bisset and Basset, Malin and Malvoisin. The crowd of names that follow appear in the same arrangement of rude versification, so as to assist the memory by the rhyme and alliteration. Several lists of the same kind, and disposed with the same art, have come down to the present day, having been found inscribed on large sheets of vellum in the archives of the churches, and decorated with the title of '*Livre des Conquerans.*' In one of these lists the surnames are seen ranged in groupes of three,

<sup>15</sup> Norman Conq. vol. i. p. 417.

thus : Bastard, Brassard, Baynard ; Bigot, Bagot, Talbot ; Toret, Trivet, Bouet ; Lucy, Lacy, Percy. Another catalogue of the conquerors of England, kept for a long time in the treasury of Battle-Abbey, contained names of singularly low and fantastic formation, such as Bonvilain and Bontevilain, Trousselot and Trousebout, L'Engayne and Longue-âpee, Ceil-de-Bœuf and Front-de-Bœuf. Several authentic acts designate as Norman knights in England one Guillaume le charretier, one Hugues le tailleur, one Guillaume le tambour ; and among the surnames of this knighthood, gathered together from every corner of Gaul, we find a great number of names belonging simply to towns and provinces : as St Quentin, St Maur, St Denis, St Malo, Tournay, Verdun, Nismes, Chalons, Etampes, Pöclefort, La Rochelle, Cahors, Champagne, Gas-cogne. Such were the men who brought into England the titles of *Noblemen* and *Gentlemen*, and by force of arms established them for themselves and their descendants.<sup>16</sup>

To resume our historical outline : In 1075, William, now undisputed sovereign of England, led an English army into Normandy to support his interest in the province of Maine. During his absence a conspiracy was formed against him among his own Norman barons. The plot failed ; and Waltheof being found guilty of misprision of treason, was condemned and executed. The death of this popular Anglo-Saxon noble, excited a deep sensation among his countrymen, who revered his memory as that of a martyr, and secretly swore to revenge his fall. The remaining years of William's life were spent amid continual tumult and distraction. His half-brother Odo, openly aspiring to the papal dignity, threatened to compromise him with a formidable foe ; the scheme was defeated by William's activity and resolution, and Odo remained in close confinement during the remainder of William's reign. Canute of Denmark next renewed his project of invading England, and had collected a fleet of one thousand vessels for this purpose at Haithaby, but William averted the storm from this quarter by secret negotiations with the Danish chiefs.<sup>17</sup> This danger had scarcely subsided when his own son Robert levied war upon his father, for refusing to invest him with the duchy of Normandy, as he had promised to the French court when meditating the invasion of England. William quickly drove his son out of the field, and the interference of the nobles and clergy, aided by the tears and entreaties of Queen Matilda, procured a termination to this unnatural struggle.

William was now getting overgrown and infirm, but a clumsy jest of a brother-monarch sufficed to awake his martial spirit, and plunge him into a formidable war. The physicians had advised him to submit to a tedious course of medicine, with the view of reducing his enormous corpulency. Philip of France, in allusion to this circumstance, said to some of his courtiers that the king of England was lying in at Rouen. This idle sarcasm was reported to William, who burst into a paroxysm of rage, and swore a mighty oath, that at his churching he would light up a hundred thousand candles in France.<sup>18</sup> In the following harvest, he hastened to perform the terrible vow ; summoning his troops, he en-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 334—336. The two words marked in italics in the text are purely of Norman extraction, and have no synonyme in the old English language.

<sup>17</sup> Chron. Sax. 187.—Saxo. 217.

<sup>18</sup> It was customary for a woman when churched, to bear in her hand a lighted taper.

tered the French territory, and began to waste every thing around him with fire and sword. The city of Mantes having been taken by surprise was fired in every quarter, and the inhabitants put to the sword, William himself, glutting his vengeance by personally superintending the troops employed in the service. Whilst thus employed, his horse, chancing to tread on some burning embers, suddenly reared, and threw the king on the pommel of the saddle. The bruise produced a rupture, accompanied with fever and inflammation, which proved fatal in six weeks. He was carried to Rouen, where he languished until the 9th of September 1087. Early on the morning of that day, he was awakened by the sound of a bell, and, inquiring what it meant, was informed that it tolled the hour of prime in the church of St Mary. "Then," said he, stretching out his arms, "I commend my soul to my lady, the mother of God, that by her holy prayers she may reconcile me to her beloved Son," and as he spoke, he expired.<sup>19</sup> From the events which followed his death, the reader may form some idea of the confused and unsettled state of society. His medical and other attendants, who had passed the night with him, seeing that he was dead, hastily mounted their horses, and rode off to take care of their property. His serving-men and vassals imitated the selfish conduct of their superiors, and having rifled the house, hurried away with their booty, leaving the royal corpse almost naked on the floor of the apartment. The citizens of Rouen were in consternation at the tidings, and hastened to prepare for the coming storm by concealing their effects, or turning them into money. "O secular pomp!" exclaims Ordericus, whose narrative we have followed in relating the particulars of William's death, and who was twelve years old when that event occurred,—*"O secular pomp! How despicable art thou, because how vain and transient! Justly art thou compared to the bubbles raised by rain; for, like them, thou swellest for a moment, to vanish into nothing. Survey this most potent hero, whom lately a hundred thousand knights were eager to serve, and whom nature dreaded, now lying for hours on the naked ground, spoiled, and abandoned by every one!"*

William was in his 63d year when he died. He was of ordinary stature, but possessed of such prodigious strength, that it is said that sitting on horseback, he could draw the string of a bow, which no other man could bend even on foot. Hunting formed his favourite amusement, and to gratify it, vast tracts of England were withdrawn from cultivation and converted into deer-ranges. His character partook largely both of the vices and virtues of a semi-barbarous age. Bold, decisive, and indefatigable, opposition roused him to the utmost energy of action; ambitious, he trampled on every right, human and divine, that opposed his path to supreme power; educated in a strict observance of religious duties, he was in some things eminently religious according to the notions of the times, he built many monasteries, and endowed others, he also invited the best-informed ecclesiastics into his dominions, and filled the churches with able and discreet pastors, when such could be procured. To the demand of homage made upon him by Gregory VII. he returned an absolute refusal, but he maintained a friendly correspondence with that pontiff till his death in 1085. Encouraged by the

<sup>19</sup> Ord. Vital. p. 661.



hope of reward from William Rufus, who appeared disposed to honour his father's memory, a sort of literary competition arose among the Latin versifiers of England and Normandy, in the composition of an epitaph to be engraven on William's shrine. The pieces composed on this occasion were as fulsome and lying as most of their species in more refined times. Perhaps two lines from the chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, would have made a more fitting epitaph than any which were offered. They run thus :

There was in kyng William's days warre and sorrowe eynow,  
So that muchdel of Engelnod thohte his lyf too long.

### Hereward Le Wake.

Of all the Anglo-Saxon warriors who distinguished themselves by their determined opposition to the Normans, Hereward le Wake was the most celebrated and most successful. His memory was long dear to the people of England, who handed down the fame of his exploits from generation to generation in their traditional songs. His father, the lord of Born in Lincolnshire, unable to restrain the turbulent temper which he manifested even in early youth, had procured an order for his banishment from Edward the Confessor. The youth submitted to the royal mandate, backed as it was by paternal authority ; and soon earned in foreign lands the praise of a fearless and irresistible warrior. He was in Flanders at the period of the conquest ; but no sooner did he hear that his father was dead, and that his paternal lands had been given to a foreigner, than he returned in haste to his native country, and, having procured the gift of knighthood from his uncle Brand, abbot of Peterborough—without which he was not entitled, according to the usages of the time, to command others—collected the vassals of his family, and drove the Norman who had insulted his mother, and usurped her inheritance, from his ancestral possessions.<sup>1</sup> The fame of his exploit drew fresh adherents to his standard, and Hereward soon found himself at the head of a band of followers whose valour and hardiment, aided by the natural fastnesses of his retreat in the Isle of Ely, enabled him to set at defiance the whole power of the Conqueror.

The Saxon abbot of Peterborough died before the close of the year 1069, and thus escaped the chastisement which his blessing the sword of an enemy to the Normans would probably have drawn upon him. William gave the vacant abbey to Turauld, a foreign monk, who had already rendered himself famous by his military propensities, and was probably thought a fit neighbour for Hereward. Turauld, nothing daunted by the prospect before him, set out with a guard of one hundred and sixty French horsemen to take possession of his new benefice, and had already reached Stamford, when the indefatigable Hereward appeared at the gates of the golden city, as Peterborough was then called, and finding the monks little resolved to defend it against the new abbot and his men-at-arms, set fire to the town, carried off all the treasures of the monastery, and gave it also to the flames. Turauld, the better to

<sup>1</sup> Ingulf. 70.

protect himself against such a daring foe, devoted sixty-two hydes of land on the domains of his abbey to the support of a body of military retainers. With the assistance of Ive Taillebois, the Norman commander of the district, he undertook a military expedition against Hereward; but the expedition terminated most disastrously for the militant churchman; for whilst Taillebois went into the forest which formed the defence of the Saxons on one side, Hereward went out on the other, and surprising the abbot and his party, who lingered in the rear afraid to expose themselves to the chances of war, he made them all prisoners, and kept them in the fens which surrounded his retreat, until they had purchased their ransom with a sum of 3000 marks.\*

Meanwhile the Danish fleet again arrived at the isle of Ely, and were welcomed by the refugees as friends and liberators. Morecar, also, and most of the exiles from Scotland, joined the party of Hereward. Prudence now compelled William to pursue energetic measures against the man whom he had at first affected to despise. He purchased the retreat of the Danes with gold, and then invested the camp of the refugees on all sides with his fleet and army. To facilitate their movements, he also constructed bridges and solid roads across the marshes. But Hereward and his companions, by incessant irruptions on all sides, so impeded the labour of the besiegers, that the conqueror of England despaired of being able to subdue this little handful of men; and at last listened to the sage recommendation of Taillebois, who, attributing the success of the Saxons to the assistance of Satan, advised the king to employ a sorceress who, by the superior efficacy of her spells, might defeat those of the English magicians. The sorceress was procured, and placed in great state in a lofty wooden tower, from which she could overlook the operations of the soldiers and labourers. But Hereward seizing a favourable opportunity, set fire to the dry reeds in the neighbourhood: the wind spread the conflagration, and enveloped the enchantress and her guards in a circle of smoke and fire which destroyed them all.<sup>3</sup> This was not the only success of the insurgents. Notwithstanding the immense superiority of the king's forces, Hereward's incessant activity baffled his every effort for many months, and would have kept the whole Norman power at bay for a longer period, had not treachery seconded the efforts of the assailants. There was in the isle of Ely a convent of monks, who, unable longer to endure the miseries of famine, sent to William's camp, and offered to point out to him a path by which he might cross the morass which protected the camp of the insurgents, provided he would guarantee to them the possession of their property. The offer was accepted, and the Norman troops, guided by the treacherous monks, penetrated unexpectedly into Hereward's camp, where they killed a thousand of the English, and compelled the rest to lay down their arms. All surrendered except Hereward and a small band of determined followers, who cut their way through their assailants into the lowlands of Lincoln. Here some Saxon fishermen, who carried their fish for sale every day to a Norman garrison in the neighbourhood, received their fugitive countrymen into their boats, and hid them under heaps of straw. The boats approached the Norman station as usual, and the garrison knowing the fishermen by sight, made their purchase

\* Petri Blessensis Continuatio Ingulfi, 125.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

of fish without suspicion, and quietly sat down to their meal. But while thus engaged, Hereward and his followers rising up from their concealment, rushed upon them with their battle-axes, and massacred nearly all of them. This coup-de-main was not the last exploit of the English guerilla captain; wherever he went, he avenged the fate of his countrymen by similar deeds, until at last, says Ingulphus, "after great battles, and a thousand dangers frequently braved and nobly terminated, as well against the king of England, as against his earls, barons, prefects, and presidents, which are yet sung in our streets,—and after having fully avenged his mother's wrongs with his own powerful right hand,—he obtained the king's pardon, and his paternal inheritance, and so ended his days in peace, and was very lately buried with his wife nigh to our monastery."

A different fate awaited his companions who were captured in the camp of Ely. Some were allowed to ransom themselves; others suffered death; and others were set at large after having been cruelly maimed and mutilated. Stigand was condemned to perpetual imprisonment. Egelwin, bishop of Durham, was confined at Abingdon, where, a few months afterwards, he died either of hunger voluntarily induced, or in consequence of forced privation. The treachery of the monks of Ely received its reward. Forty men-at-arms occupied their convent as a military post, and lived in it at their expense. The monks offered a sum of 700 marks to be relieved of the charge of maintaining such a body of soldiers; their offer was accepted, but on weighing the silver, a single drachm was found to be wanting, and the circumstance was made a pretext for extorting 300 marks more from them. Finally, royal commissioners were sent, who took away from the convent whatever valuables remained, and divided the abbey-lands into military fiefs. The monks made bitter protestations against this treatment, which no one regarded. They invoked pity on their convent,—once, said they, the fairest among the daughters of Zion, now captive and suffering,—but not a tear of sympathy was shed for them, nor a single hand raised in their cause.

## William Rufus.

CROWNED A. D. 1087.—DIED A. D. 1100.

THE Conqueror left three sons by his queen Matilda. Robert, the eldest of these, was acknowledged duke of Normandy immediately on his father's death, and satisfied with the acquisition of the ducal coronet, allowed his second brother, William, surnamed Rufus, from the colour of his hair, to claim the English crown, in virtue of his father's nomination in his favour when on his death-bed. His cause was warmly espoused by Archbishop Lanfranc who had been his preceptor in his youth, and while the barons of Normandy were yet deliberating on the succession, Rufus was crowned at Westminster by that prelate, assisted by the archbishop of York and many of the chief nobility. The third and remaining son of the Conqueror was named Henry. He had received only a portion of five thousand pounds from his father, which did not satisfy his ambition, but necessity compelled him to submit at least for



the present to the arrangement. William had predicted that his half-brother Odo would prove a turbulent subject to his successor. The prediction was soon verified. Odo was a man of considerable talents and great energy; the stormy arena of politics suited him better than the retiring and pacific habits of the cloister. Jealous of foreign influence, and particularly detesting Lanfranc, he formed a plan for dethroning William of England, and elevating his brother of Normandy, whose ear he possessed, to the English throne. Robert received their proposals with favour, and the conspirators departed to raise the standard of rebellion in their respective baronies in that kingdom.—Odo in Kent, William bishop of Durlam in Northumberland, Geoffry of Constances in Somerset, Roger Montgomery in Shropshire, Hugh Bigod in Norfolk, and Hugh de Grentmesnil in the county of Leicester.<sup>1</sup> In this emergency William owed the preservation of his crown to his English subjects, whom he succeeded by fair promises in collecting around his banner to the number of 30,000. With these, and such Norman barons as adhered to him, he took the field, and in one campaign entirely suppressed his enemies. Odo, himself, was taken at Rochester, and with difficulty escaped death from the hands of the enraged English.

By the suppression of this rebellion, Rufus was firmly established on the throne of England, and enabled to carry his arms into Normandy; but in the hour of his prosperity he forgot the promises which he had made to his English subjects, and renewed some of his most oppressive exactions. The interference of the Norman barons and French monarch effected a reconciliation betwixt the two brothers. A pacification was entered into, which provided that on the death of either, the survivor should inherit his dominions; that the king of England should, in the meantime, retain possession of the fortresses which he had acquired in Normandy, but indemnify his brother by an equivalent in England; and that the late attainders of Robert's partisans in that country should be reversed. The principal sufferers by this treaty were Edgar the etheling, and Prince Henry, the Conqueror's youngest son. William's Saxon subjects also looked upon it as a violation of the promises which he had given them when soliciting their aid against Robert's partisans, and the flame of resistance burst forth with new fury in every place where Saxons, united in a body, and not reduced to the last degree of slavery, were placed under Norman chiefs or governors. These chiefs, whether clergy or laity, were animated by one spirit, and differed in their habiliments alone. Alike under the coat of mail and the priestly cape, there was ever the same foreign conqueror, harsh, proud, avaricious, who regarded the natives of England only as so many beasts of burden, and exacted from them the meanest services without scruple or remorse. Jean de la Ville, bishop of Wells, formerly a physician at Tours, pulled down the houses of the canons of his church, to build himself a palace of the materials. Renouf Flambard, bishop of Lincoln, once a footman in the service of the duke of Normandy, plundered the inhabitants of his diocese to such an extent that, says an old historian, they coveted death rather than to live under his authority. The Norman bishops marched to the altar like counts to their military reviews, fenced round with lances: and passed day after day in gambling,

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Sax. 193.—Ord. Vital. 665.

Chron. Sax. 197.—Al. Bev. 138.—Flor. Urg. 664.

hunting, and drinking. One of them, in a fit of gaiety, had a *repast* served up to a body of Saxon monks, in the great hall of their convent, in which he compelled them to eat of dishes forbidden to their order, served up by women half-naked and with dishevelled hair. By such means were the very churches, where, if any where, Saxon and Norman should have met in peace, converted into scenes of strife and often of bloodshed. The king's officers, of course, pillaged without bounds; they plundered alike, and without mercy, the farmer's granary, and the tradesman's warehouse. At Oxford, Robert d'Oily spared neither rich nor poor. In the north, Odencan d'Umfreville seized the effects of all the English in his neighbourhood who refused to carry and hew stone for the building of his castle. In London also, the king forcibly raised bodies of men to build a new wall round the Conqueror's tower, a bridge over the Thames, and a palace or court of audience for the assembly of chiefs.<sup>3</sup> "The provinces to whose share these labours fell," says the contemporary Saxon chronicle, "were grievously tormented. Each passing year was heavy and sorrowful, on account of the numberless vexations and multiplied contributions." Wherever the royal train journeyed, the country was laid waste as by the march of an enemy's army. At the first rumour of the king's approach every one would fly from his dwelling, and hasten with whatever he could take with him into the depths of the forests and desert places.<sup>4</sup>

It would appear that William contrived to elude the execution of such parts of his treaty with Robert as were disagreeable to himself. It is certain that Robert in vain demanded his promised indemnity. The breach of contract led to a renewal of hostilities, in which William gained neither honour nor advantage. At last a favourable opportunity presented itself for the gratification of William's ambition. It was the era of the crusades, and Robert of Normandy catching the general enthusiasm, resolved to join the confederate princes in their expedition against the infidels. But his means were unequal to what were required for his outfit; and as his only resource, he made offer to his brother of the government of his dominions for three, or, according to others, five years, for an instant payment of 10,000 marks.<sup>5</sup> William joyfully accepted the proposal; the money was extorted from his English subjects, and transmitted to Normandy; and, in 1096, Robert sailed for the Holy Land, and William for Normandy. By the Normans he was received without opposition, with the exception of one solitary instance in the person of Helie de la Flèche, who for a time defended the province of Maine against him.

The death of Archbishop Lanfranc was a serious loss to William. He was a prudent counsellor, and possessed great influence over the king's mind; but the details of his history, and of his successor Anselm, belong to another section. After the retirement of the latter prelate to Rome, William persevered in the same rapacious and voluptuous career till he was suddenly arrested by death, in the New Forest, while gratifying his boundless passion for the chase. William's forest-laws had long been felt as an intolerable burden both upon serfs and nobles. The rigorous manner in which he never failed to punish the slightest transgression of the laws of the chase, had so intimidated the natives,

<sup>3</sup> Thierry's *Norm. Cong.* Vol. II. p. 194—200.

<sup>4</sup> Eadmeri Hist. 94.

<sup>5</sup> Ord. Vital. 693.—Chron. Sax. 196.

that they began to circulate fearful stories about the forests, which no man of English race, they affirmed, could enter with arms but at the peril of his life. It was said that the devil often appeared in horrible shapes to William and his Normans, while pursuing their favourite pastime in these wildernesses, and spoke aloud to them of the dreadful fate which was in reserve for them in a future world. A superstition so much in harmony with the popular feelings was strengthened by the singular chance which made hunting in the New Forest so fatal to the race of the Conqueror. In the year 1081, Richard, eldest son of the first William, had there received a mortal wound; and in May, 1100, Richard, son of Duke Robert, and nephew to the Red King, was killed by an arrow inadvertently discharged at him. The same forest was again to be the scene of a similar and still more remarkable calamity to the family of the Conqueror. On the morning of the fatal day, the king gave his friends a sumptuous repast in Winchester castle, after which he prepared for the projected hunt. While tying on his hose, and jesting with his guests, a workman presented to him six new arrows: he examined them, praised the workmanship, laid aside four of them for himself, and gave the other two to Walter Tyrrel, saying, "a good marksman should have good arrows." Walter Tyrrel was a Frenchman who had extensive possessions in Ponthieu; he was also the king's familiar friend and assiduous attendant. At the moment of departure for the forest, a monk from St Peter's convent at Gloucester entered, and put in William's hands despatches from his abbot. The abbot had had in his sleep a vision of ill omen, portending misfortune to the king; and he deemed the matter of sufficient importance to make it the subject of a special communication to his sovereign. On learning the tenor of the abbot's despatch, the king laughed aloud, and calling "to horse!" hastened into the forest, accompanied by his brother Henry, Walter Tyrrel, and several other chiefs. Here the rest of the party dispersed in different directions, but Tyrrel remained in company with the king, and their dogs hunted together. As the sun was about to set, and they had taken their station opposite to each other, each with his arrow on the cross-bow, and his finger on the trigger, a deer tracked by the hounds, passed before the king; William drew, but his bow-string breaking, the arrow did not fly, and the deer, startled by the sound, stood looking about on all sides; the king raised his head to screen his eyes from the horizontal rays of the departing sun, and observing the animal still near him, impatiently called aloud to his companion to discharge his arrow;<sup>6</sup> the order was obeyed, but Tyrrel's bolt glancing on a tree, took an oblique direction, and buried itself in the king's heart. He fell without uttering a word, and expired. Tyrrel hastened to him, but finding him already dead, he became alarmed for his own safety, and mounting his stead, galloped straight to the coast and crossed over to Normandy.<sup>7</sup> Such is the generally received version of this tragical accident; yet it is by no means a clearly ascertained point that it was by Tyrrel's arrow the king died. John of Salisbury says, that when he

<sup>6</sup> Knyghton professes to give the express words of the king's exclamation: '*Trahe, trahe arcum, ex parte Diaboli!*' p. 2373.

<sup>7</sup> Ord. Vital. 781.



wrote, it was, as doubtful by whom William was killed, as it was by whom Julian the apostate fell.<sup>8</sup>

## Henry I.

CROWNED A. D. 1100.—DIED A. D. 1135.

HENRY, surnamed for his learning Beaulere, the Conqueror's youngest son, was pursuing his game in a distant part of the New Forest when tidings were brought him of the death of his brother. He instantly put spurs to his horse, and rode precipitately to Winchester, to seize the unsquandered part of the late king's treasury, before other claimants appeared. According to the compact between Robert and William, the succession had now devolved to the former, who was also known to be on his return to Europe from the Holy Land; but Henry made no question of right when a crown was within his grasp. While the keepers of the royal treasury were yet hesitating to comply with his imperious demand for delivery of the keys, William de Breteuil, who had been of the hunting-party that day, and to whose care the treasury was confided, arrived in breathless haste, to secure his charge for the rightful heir. "Both you and I," said he to Henry, "should loyally bear in mind the faith we have pledged to your brother, Robert. He has received our homage; and present, or absent, he has a right to it." A violent altercation ensued, in the midst of which Henry drew his sword, and declared that he would make good his claim by it; but mutual friends interfering, Breteuil was prevailed on to withdraw his opposition, and Henry employed the money thus obtained so successfully that he was crowned at Westminster two days after.<sup>1</sup> His coronation-oath was the same that had been taken by the Anglo-Saxon kings; and he took care to remind his English subjects that he was an Englishman by birth, and born after the conquest. On the following day, he issued a proclamation, or charter of liberties, restoring the church to its ancient immunities, promising to exercise his feudal prerogatives with moderation, and requiring his barons to do the same by their vassals, and pledging himself to put in force the laws of Edward the Confessor as restored and amended by his father. He also recalled Anselm, and drove from his court the more licentious barons<sup>2</sup> whose effeminacy and debaucheries had long scandalized the graver part of the public.

At the solicitation of his prelates he consented to marry Matilda, or Maud, the beautiful orphan daughter of Malcolm king of Scotland, by Edgar's sister, and therefore "of the right kingly kin of England." The lady is represented as having been at first indifferent to the match, and highly averse to leave the tutelage of her aunt Christina, abbess of Wilton, to whose care she had been intrusted in childhood; but her

<sup>8</sup> See on this point Turner's Hist. of Engl. vol. I. p. 129. There are circumstances in the case which favour the idea of a meditated assassination, but the insinuation is nowhere made in any of the historical authorities.

<sup>1</sup> Ord. Vital. 792.

<sup>2</sup> The *effeminati* of our early writers, who affected to dress themselves like women. They wore tunics with deep sleeves, and mantles with long trains. The peaks of their shoes were twisted into fantastic shapes; and they wore their hair divided in front and falling in ringlets down the back. Malm. 88.—Orderic, 682.

relatives so beset her, says Matthew Paris, that she at last complied with their wishes solely to rid herself of their incessant importunities. The arguments with which they assailed the maiden might not indeed be the most irresistible that could be urged with a woman's heart, but they were weighty and reasonable notwithstanding. Matthew of Paris gives the substance of them in a very adroit manner: "Oh most noble and most beautiful of women, if thou wouldst, thou couldst raise up from its nothingness the ancient honour of England; thou wouldst be a sign of alliance, a pledge of reconciliation. But if thou persist in thy refusal, know that the enmity betwixt Saxon and Norman must prove eternal, and human blood will never cease to flow." It is certain that the match proved highly grateful to Henry's English subjects, and met with opposition only from a party amongst the Normans, who were indignant that a Saxon woman should become their queen, and set themselves to devise many ingenious objections to the marriage. Amongst other things, they contended that the princess having worn the veil at Wilton, was no longer at liberty to marry; and the objection at the first statement so startled the good Anselm, that he declared nothing should induce him to ravish from God her who was his spouse, and give her to a carnal husband.<sup>3</sup> But Matilda, on being questioned as to the fact, denied that she had ever worn the veil of her own accord, but only as a protection from the licentiousness of the Norman soldiers; and a synod of prelates over-ruled the objection in these terms: "We think the young woman is free, and may dispose of her person. Our authority being the judgment given in a like cause by the venerable Lanfranc, when the Saxon women, who had taken refuge in the monasteries through fear of the soldiers of the great William, claimed their liberty."<sup>4</sup> The decision removed Anselm's scruples, and a few days afterwards he solemnized the nuptials, and at the same time consecrated and crowned the queen.

While these things were taking place in England, Robert was lingering in Italy, fascinated by the charms of Sibylla, daughter of Godfrey, count of Brindisi. Nor was it until he had gained the hand of this lady, that he remembered that duties of a sterner kind demanded his immediate presence in Normandy. Even after his arrival in his duchy he postponed the enforcement of his claim to the English crown, and launched forth into a giddy round of extravagant feastings and frivolous pageantry, more befitting some voluptuous sybarite, than the bold and resistless crusader. At last the remonstrances of Flambard bishop of Durham, the obnoxious minister of his late brother, succeeded in firing his ambition, and determined him to invade England. Henry had committed Flambard to the tower, whence he had made his escape into Normandy, where he soon became as great a favourite with Robert as he had been with William, and probably by the same mean artifices. Henry beheld with disquietude the preparations of his brother, but cast himself—as William had done in similar circumstances—on the fidelity of his English subjects. On the 19th of July, 1101, Robert landed at Portsmouth, and his ranks were soon swelled by a number of the chiefs and rich men of England; but the bishops, the private soldiers, and the English by birth adhered generally to the side of Henry. The

<sup>3</sup> Eadmeri Hist. 57.<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

two armies remained in sight of each other for several days without coming to action, and Anselm improved the opportunity thus afforded for mediating between the parties. A negotiation was set on foot, and the two princes having met in a vacant space between the armies, and embraced as friends, terms of reconciliation were soon adjusted. Robert renounced all claim to the crown of England, and obtained in return a yearly payment of 3000 marks from Henry, the cession of all castles which he possessed in Normandy, with the exception of Damfronth, and the revocation of the judgments of forfeiture which William had pronounced against his adherents. It was also stipulated that, if either died without legitimate issue, the survivor should be his heir.<sup>5</sup>

The facility of Robert's temper was fully exhibited two years afterwards, when he made a present to Henry's queen of the stipulated payment from England, notwithstanding the embarrassment in which his profusion and heedlessness were involving him. This was not the first act of courtesy and kindness that Henry had experienced from his generous brother; but gratitude and paternal affection were alike strangers to Henry's bosom. While Robert's profuse and liberal habits exhausted his treasury, and compelled him to have recourse to measures which involved him in disputes with his barons, Henry marked, and secretly fomented the growing discord, and at last lifting off the mask, declared himself protector of Normandy, on the first invitation from the duke's enemies.<sup>6</sup> The brothers met in battle at Tinchebrai, on the 28th of September, 1106. The conflict was bloody and long-sustained by Robert's heroism, but his troops at last yielded to superior numbers, and the duke with four hundred knights, and 10,000 common soldiers, fell into the hands of the conqueror. This victory determined the fate of Normandy. Henry carried his brother to England, where he died in 1134, after a confinement of twenty-eight years, in the castle of Cardiff, Glamorganshire. Matthew of Westminster, and Matthew of Paris, both affirm that he had his eyes put out by command of his unnatural brother; but William of Malmesbury, who was alive at the period of Robert's death, declares that Robert was treated with the utmost lenity, and suffered no evil but that of solitude, during his long captivity.<sup>7</sup> Let us hope for the honour of human nature it was so.

Among the prisoners taken at Tinchebrai and sent to England, was the etheling Edgar. He had quitted England for ever, and fixed his abode in Normandy, at the court of the duke, to whose fortunes he became zealously attached, even accompanying him, it is said, to Palestine with twenty thousand men who had assembled under his standard from all parts of Britain. The Saxon chronicle represents him as having joined Robert but shortly before the battle which decided both their fates. He, the rightful king of England, dispossessed by the conquest, was now brought back the prisoner of a Norman, to close his days in captivity, on that soil which might once have owned him as its prince. His conqueror, the husband of his niece, granted him another pardon, and a small pension on which he lived in a remote part of the country, where he soon sunk into such obscurity, that the time and circumstances of his death are not preserved in history. Such was the end of the last

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 58.—Ord. Vital. 788.

<sup>6</sup> Chron. Sax. 212.—Ord. Vital. 814.

<sup>7</sup> See Turner's Hist. of Engl. vol. I. p. 157.



king of England on whom that title was bestowed by the unawed choice of the Anglo-Saxon nation.

Robert had a son, named William, a child of five years of age when brought before Henry after the defeat and captivity of his father. The child was intrusted, by command of Henry, to the care of Elie de Saen, a Norman baron, who had been his father's friend. But the king soon became apprehensive, lest, in the person of the young prince, he might at some future period encounter a formidable rival, and a trusty officer was despatched to the castle of Saen with orders to reclaim the child. The messenger arrived in Elie's absence, but friendly hands suspecting the nature of the commission on which he came, carried off the sleeping child before the royal officer reached his apartment, and hastened with him into the French territory. Louis, surnamed *Le Gros*, who had by this time discovered how much more dangerous a neighbour Henry was likely to prove than his brother, received the rightful heir of Normandy with pleasure, and vowed to grant him the investiture of his paternal dominions when he should be of age to rule them. In the name of the young duke, he entered into a league with the Flemings and Anjouans, and attacked Henry at every point of his Norman frontier. Meanwhile, the youth grew up into manhood, and became distinguished by his valour and accomplishments; his partisans increased with his rising fame, and Henry began to tremble at the gathering storm which soon threatened to burst upon his head. By accident, Henry and Louis met in the vicinity of Brenneville. Henry had with him five hundred knights, Louis four hundred. A severe conflict ensued, which ended in the total defeat of the French knights, and the flight of Louis. William of Normandy also was in the battle, and only saved himself by flight. An end was at last put to these wasting hostilities, by the interference of Pope Calixtus II. Under the treaty negotiated by this pontiff, Henry retained the possession of Normandy, and the king of France, as sovereign lord, consented to receive the homage of William, Henry's son, in lieu of that of the father.<sup>8</sup>

Peace being thus restored, and the ambition of Henry fully gratified, he prepared once more to cross the channel, with his son William, and a number of the young Norman nobility. The fleet destined for this purpose assembled, in the month of December, 1120, in the port of Harfleur; but, before it weighed anchor, a Norman mariner, called Fitz-Stephen, presented himself to the king, and offering him a mark of gold, addressed him thus: "Etienne, son of Herard, my father, all his life followed thy father on the sea. He steered the vessel in which thy father went to the conquest of England. I ask of thee, that thou wouldst confer on me the like honour. I have a ship in readiness, and suitably fitted up, called *La Blanche Nef*, which is at thy service." The king replied, that he had already selected a vessel for himself, but that in consideration of the request of a son of Etienne, he would confide his son and his treasures to his safe conduct. The vessel which carried the king set sail first, with a south wind, and reached the English coast in safety. But the young prince spent some hours on deck in feasting and dancing with his gay and thoughtless companions, before he permitted the anchor of the *Blanche Nef* to be weighed. The

<sup>8</sup> Ord. Vital. 866.—The grandmother of Calixtus was Alice, daughter of Richard II., duke of Normandy.

vessel was manned by fifty skilful rowers ; the son of Etienne was at the helm ; and they held their course rapidly under a clear moon, along the coast in the vicinity of Harfleur, before reaching the open sea. The rowers, stimulated by wine, pulled hard to overtake the king's ship ; but, too eager to accomplish this, they incautiously entangled themselves among some rocks under water,—the helmsman's hand proved untrue,—and, amid the shouts and merriment of her disorderly company, the *Blanche-Nef* struck against a rock with all the velocity of her course, and instantly began to fill. The prince was immediately lowered into a boat, and told to row himself back to land ; but the shrieks of his sister, Adela, recalled him to the wreck, and the small boat was swamped by the numbers which precipitated themselves into it. Soon after, the ship itself went down, and all on board, to the number of three hundred persons, among whom were eighteen noble ladies, and one hundred and forty young Norman nobility, were buried in the waves. The despairing cry of the wretched sufferers was heard from the other vessels, already far at sea, but no one dared to suspect the cause. Two men alone saved themselves by clinging to the great yard, which was left floating on the water. The master of the ship, after sinking once, rose to the surface of the water, and swimming towards them, called out, "The prince ! what has become of him ?" "We have seen no more of him, nor of his brother, nor of his sister, nor of their companions," was the answer. "Woe is me !" then exclaimed the unfortunate mariner, and voluntarily sunk beneath the waves. The night was extremely cold, and the weakest of the two survivors, benumbed and worn out by his efforts, lost his grasp of the spar, and sunk in the act of uttering a prayer for the safety of his companion. Berauld, the humblest of the survivors, perhaps of the whole party that had sailed that day in the *Blanche-Nef*, wrapped in his sheep-skin doublet, continued to support himself on the surface of the water, and was picked up in the morning by a fishing-boat. The old English historians affirm that king Henry was never seen to smile after hearing of the loss of his son ; but they evidently regarded the catastrophe, so fatal to the highest Norman families, as well as to the king, as the just judgment of heaven on their tyrannical masters.<sup>9</sup> The young prince, though the son of a Scottish princess, and the grand-nephew of a Saxon king, had imbibed the feelings of a Norman, and had been heard to say, that if ever he came to reign over these miserable English, he would yoke them like oxen to the plough. The threat was remembered now that it was vain, and the English writers gloried over the destruction of the man who had confessed his antipathy to their countrymen. "The proud youth !" exclaims Henry of Huntingdon, "he thought of his future reign ; but God said, 'It shall not be so,—thou impious man, it shall not be.' And it has come to pass, that his brow, instead of being encircled by a crown of gold, has been dashed against the rocks of the ocean. 'Twas God himself who would not that the son of the Norman should again see England !"

Henry's first wife, Matilda, had died in 1118. The loss of his only legitimate son brought the succession again within the grasp of his hated nephew. To defeat the hopes of that prince, Henry offered his hand to Adelais, the daughter of Geoffrey, duke of Louvain, and niece

<sup>9</sup> Chron. Sax. 222.—Hunting. apud Angl. Sac. tom. II. p. 696.

to Pope Calixtus. The marriage was solemnized on February, 1121; but their union proved without issue, and Henry formed the resolution of settling the crown on his daughter Maud, the widow of the emperor Henry V. He obtained the consent of his barons to this arrangement, but they viewed with much dissatisfaction her subsequent marriage to Geoffrey Plantagenet,<sup>10</sup> eldest son to the earl of Anjou.

The death of his nephew, William, who had shortly before been invested with the county of Flanders, the greatest fief of the French crown, relieved Henry of his greatest fears; and the successive births of three grandsons, Henry, Geoffrey, and William, promised stability to the order of succession which he sought to establish. But the impatient ambition of his son-in-law, who demanded to be put in instant possession of Normandy, and the indifference, amounting almost to hatred, with which Geoffrey and Maud regarded each other, embittered the last years of his reign, and detained him in Normandy settling family-broils. A surfeit of lampreys, of which he was very fond, though they always injured him, at last terminated his existence, on the 1st of December, 1135, in the 36th year of his reign. In his dying moments he declared to his natural son, Robert, count of Gloucester, who was with him, that he left all his possessions to his daughter.<sup>11</sup>

Henry was of middle stature; his eye was mild and serene: his chest broad and well-developed; and his black hair clustered luxuriantly over his forehead. Although he fell a victim to his appetite, it is recorded of him, that he was usually temperate in his diet, and displeased with all appearance of excess in others; but he was lewd in the extreme, and of a fiery ungovernable temper. He had excellent natural abilities, and had cultivated letters in his youth with much assiduity and success. The most amiable feature of his character, was the strong attachment which he bore to all his children. Nothing moved him so much as their deaths. Yet, the most unhesitating perfidy and relentless cruelty marked his dealings toward all who had offended him. Death, the loss of sight, or perpetual imprisonment, was their usual portion. His military talents were great, and he was unquestionably one of the most profound politicians of his age. He began his reign with many acts of favourable omen to his English subjects, and for a time he enjoyed and merited their confidence; but no sooner did he feel himself securely seated in the throne, which he had at first usurped, than he threw away the mask, and treated them with the most marked contempt. They were carefully excluded from every office of power or emolument in church and state. No virtue nor merit could advance an Englishman, while the most slender accomplishments were prized and rewarded in the person of an Italian, Frenchman, or Norman.<sup>12</sup> He prided himself on his inflexible administration of the fiscal laws of the kingdom; but no one could sit as judge in one of his courts of justice, who wore not the sword and baldric, the ensigns of Norman nobility, and moreover spoke the French tongue. There even were instances in which the testimony of a man ignorant of the language of the Conqueror, was deemed incompetent evidence in a court of law. Henry's grand and exclusive aim was to

<sup>10</sup> That is, *Plante-de-genet*, or *Broom-plant*. Geoffrey had received this name from his fondness for hunting in the woods, and his usually wearing a slip of broom in his cap. Script. Rer. Franc. Tom. xii. p. 581.

<sup>11</sup> Malm. 178.

<sup>12</sup> Eadm. 94, 110.



enrich and aggrandise his family. For this he spared no degree of exertion himself; for this he violated the most solemn, and oft-repeated promises; for this he drained the very blood and sinews of his English subjects, and crushed the spirit of a brave and faithful nation.

## Stephen.

BORN A. D. 1104.—DIED A. D. 1154.

WE have seen with what anxiety, and by what strong measures, Henry endeavoured to secure the succession to his only legitimate descendant. His precautions proved vain; it was the age of usurpations, and a usurper seized the crown on the death of Henry. This was Stephen, earl of Boulogne, the second son of Stephen, earl of Blois, by Adela the daughter of the Conqueror. The younger son of no opulent family, he had been indebted to the generosity of his uncle Henry for his first advancement in the world, and marriage with the heiress of Boulogne. He had also been the first of the laity to swear fealty to Henry's daughter. And between him and all hereditary pretensions to succeed to the Conqueror, stood the empress Maud, her three sons, and his own elder brother. Yet, in spite of oaths and gratitude, and in the face of all right and justice, he no sooner heard of his uncle's death, than he hastened from Boulogne to England. The inhabitants of Dover, suspecting his intentions, shut their gates against him, and he met with a similar repulse at Canterbury. But, nothing daunted by this unsuccessful beginning, he pressed on to London, where he was received by the populace with loud acclamations. Corboil, archbishop of Canterbury, and Roger, bishop of Salisbury, and chief justiciary and regent of the kingdom, favoured his pretensions; and, on the 22d of December, 1135, he was declared king of England by the very prelates, counts, and barons, who had so recently sworn to give the kingdom to Matilda and her children. Some of his supporters added new perjuries to their falsehood. Bryod, the royal seneschal, swore that the king, in his last moments, had disinherited his daughter, and named Stephen as his successor. The bishop of Salisbury declared that he regarded his own oath as null, because the king had afterwards given his daughter in marriage without the consent of his prelates and barons. Others remembered that the oath had been imposed on them by a power which they could not resist; and besides, it now appeared to them a shameful thing that so many brave men and noble warriors should be ruled over by a woman. Henry, bishop of Winchester, the usurper's brother, as papal legate, added his sanction to the whole proceedings. And the pope himself completed this "disgusting scene of political perfidy," by granting letters of confirmation to the new king. "We have learned," said that holy personage, in his despatch to the successful usurper, "that thou hast been elected by the common wish and unanimous consent of nobles and people, and that thou hast been anointed by the prelates of the kingdom. Considering that the suffrages of so many cannot have been united in thy person, without the especial co-operation of Divine grace, and moreover that thou art kin to the late king in the nearest degree, we look

with satisfaction on all that has been done in thy favour, and adopt thee, with paternal affection, as a son of the blessed apostle Peter, and of the holy Roman church."<sup>1</sup>

Stephen was at first very popular among the Normans, among whom he freely dissipated the accumulated wealth of the three preceding reigns. He likewise converted a large portion of the royal domains into fiefs, for the gratification of his adherents, and substituted independent courts and governors for the royal prefects who had hitherto ruled in the king's name and for the profit of the king only. He bought peace from Geoffrey of Anjou, Matilda's husband, for an annual pension of 5000 marks; and even won over the late king's natural son, Robert of Gloucester, by similar artifices, to his party. With the common people, and particularly with the citizens of London, he ingratiated himself by his condescending deportment, and a certain jocular familiarity always pleasing to vulgar minds.<sup>2</sup> By means such as these, Stephen secured general popularity, and seemed for a time to be as securely seated on his throne as any sovereign in Europe. But the aspect of affairs soon changed. Several barons, not satisfied with what they had already extorted from Stephen's liberality, demanded farther concessions and larger grants; and, when denied, proceeded to take by force of arms whatever they had set their hearts upon. Every baron fortified his castle, or built what strongholds he pleased, to maintain and extend his own robberies as well as secure himself from aggression. The whole kingdom was thus transformed into one scene of outrage and plunder, and amidst the incessant conflicts of rival gangs of avowed banditti, all law and order were set at defiance. The partisans of Matilda eagerly fomented the growing strife; and David king of Scotland, threatened an invasion in support of his niece's claims. Stephen marked the storm which was gathering around him, and prepared to meet it with firmness. "They chose me king, and now they abandon me!" he exclaimed. "But, by the birth of Christ I swear, they shall never call me a deposed king." In order to have an army on which he could depend, he took into his pay a number of foreign soldiers, and invited knights and adventurers from every country of Europe to settle in his dominions. He seized two bishops, and his own chancellor, and threw them into prison; and made an unsuccessful attempt to get hold of the person of Robert, count of Gloucester. But these efforts only involved him in fresh difficulties. The arrest of the bishops aroused the church against him; Robert eagerly renounced the allegiance from which the king's own act had virtually released him; and as to the foreign mercenaries, their presence only increased the public discontent. "Every where from their castles," says the unknown writer of the '*Gesta Stephani*,' they confederated for all mischief; and the prey they were allowed to seize did not always satisfy their insatiable rapacity." The Saxon chronicler has, in his own simple but nervous manner, drawn a forcible picture of the lamentable state of things thus produced: "In this king's time," says he, "all was dissension, and evil, and rapine. Against him soon rose rich men. They had sworn oaths, but no truth maintained,—they were all forsworn and forgetful of their oath,—they built castles which they held out against him,—they cruelly oppressed

<sup>1</sup> Script. Rer. Franc. Tom. xvi. p. 392.—*Gesta. Reg. Steph.* apud Duchesne, 928.

<sup>2</sup> Malm. 179.

the wretched men of the land with castle-work,—they filled the castles with devils and evil men,—they seized those whom they supposed to have any goods, men, and labouring women, and threw them into prison, for their gold and silver, and inflicted on them unutterable tortures. Some they hanged up by the feet, and smoked with foul smoke,—some by the thumbs, or by the beard, and hung coats of mail on their feet,—they put them into dungeons with adders, and snakes, and toads,—many thousands they wore out with hunger. This lasted the nineteen years while Stephen was king, and it grew continually worse and worse. They burned all the towns: thou mightest go a day's journey, and not find a man sitting in a town, nor an acre of land tilled.”<sup>3</sup>

Ordericus Vitalis speaks of a conspiracy formed by the English at this time for massacring or expelling all the Normans, and elevating the Scottish king to the throne of England. “In the year 1137, on one day, and at one appointed hour,” says he, “a general massacre was to take place throughout England.” The plot, he adds, was discovered by Le Noir, bishop of Ely, but the principal conspirators had time to fly. Thierry has received this story on the single authority of Vitalis, and made it the groundwork of a long and ingenious comment.<sup>4</sup> But the whole affair is justly discredited by Lord Lyttelton, and succeeding historians.

In 1138, the Scots invaded England, and occupied without resistance all the country betwixt the Tweed and the northern limit of the province of York. The Normans had not yet reared in that part of the country those imposing fortresses which they erected in it in later times, so that no obstacle opposed the progress of ‘the Scottish ants,’ as an old author calls them.<sup>5</sup> David, though a brave and humane prince, could not restrain the excesses of his rude troops, and the Normans took care to prejudice the minds of the Saxon inhabitants of the banks of the Humber—who might otherwise have hailed the invaders as deliverers—with exaggerated stories of their barbarities. They had also the address to enlist the old national superstitions on their side, by invoking the saints of English race to aid them in the field, and arraying themselves under their banners. Toustain, archbishop of York, himself a Norman, set up the standards of St Cuthbert of Durham, St John of Beverley, and St Wilfrid of Rippon. These popular flags, which probably had not seen the light since the Conquest, were now brought forth from their dusty repositories in the churches, and conveyed to Elfortun, now Northallerton, where the Norman chiefs had resolved to give battle to the enemy. An instinct, half-religious, half-patriotic, drew the Saxons around the standards of their forefathers; and when the Scottish army had crossed the Tees, they beheld the men whose neutrality at least they had reason to expect, making common cause with their Norman oppressors against them. The Normans had set up the mast of a ship on four wheels, at the top of this they placed a box containing the consecrated host, and around it they hung the favourite banners of the English. This standard—of a kind very common in the middle ages—occupied the centre of the army when drawn up in order of battle. The flower of the Norman chivalry took their post around it, after swearing to defend it unto death. The Saxon archers flanked both wings of the

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Sax. apud Mackintosh.

<sup>4</sup> Norm. Conq. vol. II. p. 258—279.

<sup>5</sup> Fornicæ Scoticæ. Matt. Paris.



main body, and formed the front ranks. The Scottish army, with merely a lance for its standard, advanced in two bodies. The king's son, Prince Henry, commanded the men of the Lowlands and the English volunteers of Cumberland and Northumberland; while the king himself was at the head of all the clans of the mountains and isles. Henry's troops charged the centre of the Norman army firmly and rapidly, and broke through it like a cobweb, but they were ill supported, and the lofty standard remained erect. In the second charge the mountaineers drew their swords in order to close upon the foe, but the Saxon archers extending themselves on the flanks, assailed them with showers of arrows, while the Norman horsemen clad in full panoply charged them in front, with close ranks and lances lowered. The Gaels, unpractised in regular evolutions, no sooner felt themselves unable to bear down the enemy's ranks, and still assailed by the deadly arrows of a distant foe, than they lost courage, and dispersed in all directions. Thus ended the famous battle of the Standard, as it was afterwards called.

A still more formidable evil soon threatened Stephen. Robert of Gloucester was now prepared to assert the claims of his sister Matilda. He conducted her into England in September, 1139; supporters of her claims started up on all sides, and a dismal scene of intestine warfare ensued. The clergy secretly espoused the cause of the empress which daily gained popularity, and in 1141 the struggle was suspended for a while by the capture of Stephen near Lincoln. Matilda was now received by all parties as the rightful queen of England, and crowned accordingly at Winchester. But her first acts disgusted her subjects, and proved her incapacity to hold the sceptre. The first words she addressed to the people of London were to demand an enormous tallage; and when the citizens, before complying with this demand, made suit that the laws of King Edward might be restored, she rejected their application with disdain. The affability and condescension of the late king was yet fresh in the minds of the disappointed citizens, and contrasted powerfully with the tone now assumed towards them by his rival, and she a woman! Stung with disappointment and shame, the warlike Londoners took up arms and caused the alarm-bells to be rung in every steeple as a signal for a general rising of the population. The queen, with her Norman and Anjouan warriors, finding themselves surprised, and not daring to risk in narrow and crowded streets a conflict in which superiority in arms and military science has always proved itself of little avail, hastily mounted their horses and fled towards Oxford. The expulsion of Matilda gave a new direction to the popular feeling; the partisans of Stephen again took courage, and were permitted to garrison London, whither also the wife of the captive king repaired, and there established her head-quarters. The bishop of Winchester, who in the first moments of Matilda's success had deserted her brother's cause, now again declared for him, and hoisted his flag on the castle and episcopal palace, and the capture of Robert of Gloucester consummated the ruin of the queen's cause. The two parties now concluded an agreement, according to which affairs were restored to precisely their former situation. The liberty of Robert was only purchased by the release of Stephen, and the country was again subjected to the most desolating species of warfare. Stephen's partisans predominated in the central and eastern parts of England; but Matilda's cause was supported by the

churchmen, the power of Normandy, and by the Welsh. "All England, in the meantime"—to use the words of a contemporary historian—"wore one universal aspect of misery and desolation. Multitudes abandoned their beloved country and went into voluntary exile; others, forsaking their own houses, built wretched huts in the churchyards, hoping for protection from the sacredness of the place. Whole families, after sustaining life as long as they could by eating herbs, roots, and the flesh of dogs and horses, at last died of hunger; and you might see many pleasant villages without a single inhabitant of either sex."<sup>6</sup>

In 1149, Henry Fitz-Empress,<sup>7</sup> as he was called, being arrived at the military age of sixteen years, was sent to receive the honour of knighthood at the hands of his grand-uncle David king of Scotland. The ceremony was performed with great pomp at Carlisle, and the prince, after spending some months at the Scottish court, returned to Normandy, which duchy was resigned to him by his father, on whose decease soon after he succeeded to the territories of Anjou, Touraine, and Maine. In the year following he married Eleanor duchess of Aquitaine, whose dominions extended from the Loire to the foot of the Pyrenees, but who had been only six weeks before repudiated by Louis the Young. Stephen beheld the increasing power of Matilda's son with well-founded alarm, and vainly endeavoured to prevail upon Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, to crown his eldest son, Eustace, king of England. In the meantime Henry arrived in England, on the 6th of January, 1153, and immediately laid siege to the town and castle of Marlborough, whence he marched upon Wallingford, where he was met by Stephen at the head of an opposing army. The barons of both parties laboured hard to effect a reconciliation betwixt the two rivals, and the death of Eustace facilitated the negotiation. Hostilities were suspended, and in a great council, held at Winchester in the month of November that same year, it was agreed that Stephen should retain the crown during his life; that he should adopt Henry and declare him his successor; and that William, a younger son of Stephen, should, on condition of swearing allegiance to Henry, have a large appanage bestowed upon him.

Shortly after this arrangement, King Stephen was taken ill at Dover, where he closed his wearisome and chequered life on the 25th of October, 1154.<sup>8</sup>

## Henry II.

BORN A. D. 1120.—DIED A. D. 1184.

HENRY PLANTAGENET ascended the throne of England under the most favourable auspices. The people of England, disgusted with the incessant disorders of preceding reigns, beheld with delight a fair prospect of repose at last opening upon them, and received their new king with unanimous acclamations. The first acts of his government were

<sup>6</sup> Gesta Reg. Steph. 961. The language of this anonymous writer singularly coincides with that of the Saxon chronicles.

<sup>7</sup> Fitz-emperesse, that is, son of the empress, to distinguish him from his grandfather.

<sup>8</sup> Chron. Gervas. al. 1376.—Hunting. Lib. viii. 228.

equally wise and vigorous, and confirmed the high opinion which the nation entertained of him. Immediately after his coronation and that of Eleanor had been solemnised in the abbey of Westminster, he issued a charter confirmatory of that of his grandfather,<sup>1</sup> and commanded by proclamation all the foreign mercenaries of Stephen's army to quit the kingdom. Their expulsion was a matter of equal rejoicing to English and Normans, who had alike suffered from their outrages and exactions. He resumed possession of the royal castles which had been usurped during the late troubles by Stephen's restless barons; he levelled with the ground many strongholds which had been erected without warrant of law; with the approbation of his council he revoked nearly all the grants which Stephen had bestowed upon his creatures, and caused the laws of the realm once more to be enforced and respected by all parties and ranks of the community. The hearts of the English revived under the benign influence of these measures. In their gratitude they remembered that Saxon blood flowed in Henry's veins; and the monarch on his part saw, well-pleased, the Saxon annalists setting forth his descent from the great Alfred, without mentioning either his grandfather Henry I., or his great-grandfather the Conqueror: "Thou art son," said they, "to the most glorious empress Matilda, whose niece was Matilda daughter to Margaret queen of Scotland, whose father was Edward, son of King Edmund Ironside, who was great-grandfather to King Alfred."<sup>2</sup>

One of the king's first measures was the appointment of Thomas à Becket to be chancellor of England. The transactions in which this famous ecclesiastic was engaged, and which form so large a part of the national history of his time, will be detailed in our memoir of that prelate. It was by the advice of Becket that Henry proposed a treaty of marriage between his eldest son and the daughter of the French monarch. The children were yet in their cradle, but the proposal was most graciously received, and the espousals duly solemnised at London. The object which the politic Henry had in view in this transaction, was, doubtless, to found a claim to the crown of France in the event of Louis dying without male issue, the question as to the exclusion of females by the supposed Salic law not having been yet agitated. This alliance gave rise to several short and unimportant wars betwixt the royal fathers-in-law, who soon differed as to the respective pretensions of the espoused children.

One of the most important events of Henry's reign, was the annexation of Ireland to the English crown. So early as the second year of his reign he had obtained a bull from Pope Adrian IV. authorizing and exhorting him to undertake the conquest of that island; but his mother, the empress, dissuaded him from the attempt. The elevation of Strongbow to the royal dignity in Leinster, afforded him a specious pretence for interfering in the affairs of Ireland. Henry was received without opposition by the petty princes of that country, and having received their homage, and imposed a moderate annual tribute upon each, he returned to England, leaving Hugh De Lacy his governor in Dublin, and justiciary of the kingdom.

Henry had now reached the height of his prosperity. He had made his peace with the Papal see, so lately threatening to launch its terrible

<sup>1</sup> Blackstone's Law Tracts, vol. II. p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ailr. Rieval. 350.



thunders at his head for the murder of its favourite Becket; his vast possessions in France were unchallenged; the Welsh had been driven to their fastnesses, and had received a viceroy at his hands; Scotland threatened not an invasion; Ireland had acknowledged him her lord-paramount;<sup>3</sup> and England was unagitated by a single unruly baron. His numerous family were growing up in apparent harmony around him; and his friendship was courted by every prince of Europe. But amidst all this apparent prosperity and security, Henry stood upon the brink of a precipice. A mighty conspiracy was forming against him, to which even his own family had lent themselves. His eldest son, Henry, whom he had caused to be crowned two years before, was at this period only eighteen years of age, and was easily persuaded by designing flatterers, to regard the ceremony which had been performed on him, as something more than a mere elevation to nominal royalty. Richard his next brother, on whom, at the age of twelve, Henry had conferred the duchy of Aquitaine, conceived himself fully qualified to wield the reigns of government at the precocious age of sixteen. Geoffrey, Henry's third son, a youth of fifteen, modestly claimed to be put in immediate possession of the dukedom of Brittany, in virtue of his betrothment to Constance the daughter and heiress of the last duke. Eleanor encouraged the pride and ambition of her sons, in revenge for her husband's inconstancy; and the king of France still more eagerly fed the discord. Henry had taken his eldest son with him into Aquitaine; but the youth seized the opportunity to make his escape by night into the French territory. Messengers were instantly despatched to the king of France to demand the young fugitive in the name of paternal authority. King Louis received these ambassadors in his plenary court, having at his right hand his young son-in-law arrayed in royal ensigns. When the envoys had presented their despatches, the king inquired "From whom do ye bring me this message?" "From Henry king of England, duke of Normandy, duke of Aquitaine, count of Anjou and Maine," duly responded the envoys. "That," returned the king, "is not true: for here at my side is Henry, king of England, who has nothing to say to me by you; but if it be his father, the heretofore king of England, to whom ye give these titles,—know that he has been dead ever since the day when his son first wore the crown; and that as for his pretension to be king still, after resigning his kingdom to his son in the face of the whole world, that matter will in good time be righted."<sup>4</sup> Young Henry was soon after this solemnly recognised as the true and only king of England, in a general assembly of all the peers, barons, and bishops of the kingdom of France. In that council, king Louis, and all his barons swore to aid the son according to their ability, in conquering the states of the father; and the youthful king's first act was to grant donations of lands and honours in England, and on the continent, to the principal vassals of the king of France.<sup>5</sup>

The flight of the young king gave the signal for a general rising of his adherents. His example was soon after followed by his two brothers, Richard and Geoffrey, and a great number of the barons holding estates in Normandy, Anjou, Maine, and other foreign countries. Even the queen herself was preparing to withdraw to the court

<sup>3</sup> See Memoir of Strongbow.

<sup>4</sup> Script. Rer. Franc. Tom. xvi. p. 628.

<sup>5</sup> Hoved. 531.

of her former husband, but having been apprehended in disguise, was remitted to solitary confinement by her indignant spouse.<sup>6</sup> The flames of war were now kindled, and burst forth at once in different places. The king of France with young Henry, at the head of a prodigious army, entered Normandy on one side, and invested Verneuil; the earls of Flanders and Boulogne entered it on the other, and laid siege to Aumale; while the disaffected barons of Anjou, Aquitaine, and Brittany, took the field, and desolated the royal demesnes in their provinces. Nor did England itself enjoy greater tranquillity. For the northern counties were overrun and laid waste by the Scots as far as Carlisle, while the earls of Chester and Leicester appeared in arms in the centre of the kingdom.

While these astounding events were taking place, Henry II. remained in Normandy, and evinced little either of chagrin or alarm; he trusted to the strength of his fortified towns, and the tried fidelity of their governors. His Brabantine mercenaries stood him in good service in his emergency. With little more than their aid, he arrested the progress of the king of France and compelled him to a disgraceful retreat, and shut up the insurgent leaders of the Bretons in the town of Dol, which surrendered to him after a siege of a few days. The news of these events so disheartened the rebellious barons, that they dismissed their followers, and retired into their castles. Nor were the king's adversaries in Britain more successful. De Lacy, Henry's justiciary, took and dismantled the town of Leicester, the property of Robert de Belle-mont, the king's most inveterate enemy; and soon after defeated that earl himself, and took him prisoner, with his countess, and several other noble rebels. The nobility of Lincolnshire and Yorkshire also rallied round the king's standard, and headed by Geoffrey, Henry's natural son by the Fair Rosamond, arrested the devastating progress of the king of Scotland. Henry returned to England in the month of July, 1174, and immediately proceeded to Canterbury, to perform his devotions at the shrine of Becket, now the favourite saint of the English nation. It would be difficult to divine what were Henry's precise motives for this piece of ostentatious devotion at this precise juncture. It is probable, they were more worldly than spiritual. As soon as he came within sight of the metropolitan church where the saint's body lay, he dismounted, laid aside his silken apparel, uncovered his feet, and walked on barefoot upon the flinty road. Having arrived in the church, he prostrated himself with his face to the ground, with many sighs and tears, in the presence of all the people of the town, drawn together by the sound of the bells. He then, attended by a great many Norman bishops and abbots, and all the monks of the chapels of Canterbury, proceeded to the vault in which the archbishop's corpse lay, where kneeling down on the stone of the tomb, and laying aside his clothes, he caused the bishops first, and after them the monks, to apply three or four lashes to his shoulders, with these words: "As the Redeemer was scourged for the sins of men, so be thou for thy sin." "After being thus beaten," says the contemporary historian, "he persevered in his orisons to the holy martyr, all that day, and all the succeeding night.—taking no food, nor remitting for one moment his devotions; such as

<sup>6</sup> Gervase, 1124.

he came so he remained; he would not allow a carpet, or any thing of the kind, to be placed under his knees. After matins, he made the circuit of the church above, prayed before each altar, and then returned to the vault of the saint. On Saturday, when the sun was risen, he asked for, and heard mass; then having drank holy water of the martyr, and filled his flask with it, he joyfully departed from Canterbury.<sup>7</sup> Henry had scarcely arrived in London, before news were brought him of the capture of the king of Scotland by Ralph de Glandeville. He leapt from his bed and wept for joy at the unexpected announcement, and instantly summoned his friends to communicate the happy tidings. The captivity of the Scottish king blasted the schemes of the confederates; and on the 29th of September, 1174, Louis of France consented to a peace of which Henry prescribed the terms. The victor used his power with a father's leniency. The young princes were not only pardoned, but received into favour, and enriched by new liberalities, while their supporters and adherents, with the exception of the king of Scotland, and the earls of Chester and Leicester, who were to be separately treated with, received a full amnesty and forgiveness.<sup>8</sup>

The brothers kept their engagements to their father pretty faithfully for some time. But when Henry proposed to his younger sons, that they should take the oath of fealty to their elder brother, as vassals for Poitou and Brittany, the fiery and furious Richard spurned at the proposal, and a terrible contest ensued between the brothers, in which neither party gave quarter. Aquitaine rose against Richard, and the king of France declared himself the ally of the young king, whilst Geoffrey made common cause with his elder brother. The father, alarmed at the serious aspect which the quarrel was assuming, would have recalled his two sons, but they disobeyed him, and persisted in waging war against the third. Alarmed for the safety of Poitou, and justly suspecting the selfish designs of the French king, the father joined his forces to those of his son Richard, and went in person to lay siege to Limoges. Thus the domestic war recommenced under a new aspect. It was no longer the league of the three sons against the father; but the eldest and the youngest were arrayed against the other son united with the father. One month after the renewal of hostilities, Henry the younger, either apprehensive of the consequences of the unequal struggle in which he had engaged, or from a real feeling of remorse at his unnatural conduct, presented himself before his father, and begged that he would interfere as mediator between Richard and himself. The father listened to the proposal with joy, and immediately set about effecting a reconciliation between his sons. But Geoffrey declined his interference, and insisted on maintaining the war against Richard. Amongst other envoys, came a Norman clerk to Count Geoffrey, and holding a crucifix in his hand besought him by the love of Christ to spare the blood of his brother Christians, and not to imitate the crime of Absalom in his pertinacious opposition to his father's will. "What!" answered the youth, "wouldst thou have me deprive myself of my inheritance?" "God forbid! my lord," replied the priest, "I wish nothing to your detriment."—"Thou dost not understand me," returned the count of Brittany, "it is the fate of our family that none of us shall love

<sup>7</sup> Gervase, 1424.<sup>8</sup> Rymer, I. 30. Hoved. 309.



the rest. This is our heritage, and none of us will ever relinquish it." It was indeed believed by many at that time, that the influence of an evil destiny lay upon the race of the Plantagenets, and that they were doomed by a series of family feuds, and the frequent shedding of each other's blood, to expiate some mysterious crime. But the true evil genius of the family, besides their own evil passions, was one Bertrand de Boice, lord of Hautefort, a man of consummate ability, and without principle. This man had gained an entire ascendancy over the minds both of Henry and his sons, and he used it for the most malignant purposes, seeking—to use the mystic language of the day—to stir up the blood against the flesh,—to sever the head from the limbs.<sup>9</sup> Boice saw with regret the returning compunctions of the son, and the reviving tenderness of the father, and resolved to blast both. By arts known only to himself, he soon persuaded the young prince to abandon his father's side, and again throw himself into the arms of the insurgents. He was on the eve of once more meeting his parent in the field, when death terminated his restless and feverish career. Henry was deeply affected by the tidings of his death, and resolved to take stern vengeance on Bertrand de Boice, whom he considered the real criminal in the new revolt. He shut him up in his castle of Hautefort, and quickly compelled him to surrender at discretion. When led before the king, Bertrand's courage and wit never for one instant forsook him. "Bertrand, Bertrand," said Henry, with a derisive smile, "thou used to say that thou never hadst occasion for half thy wit, but know that the time is come when the whole would not be too much for thee."—"My liege," returned the Aquitanian, unquelled by the bitter taunt, "it is true that I said so; and I said the truth."—"And I think," rejoined Henry, "thy wit has failed thee."—"Yes," replied Bertrand, in a graver tone, and affecting some agitation of manner, "Yes, it failed me on the day that the valiant young king, thy son expired; on that day I lost wit, discretion, and knowledge." At the mention of his son, whose name he was totally unprepared to hear uttered, the king of England melted into tears. When he recovered from the agitation, all his purposes of revenge were dissipated, and in the prisoner now awaiting sentence from his lips, he no longer beheld the rebel and the seducer, but only the friend of the son for whom he mourned. "Yes Bertrand," said the relenting monarch, "you have good reason and cause to lose your wits for my son, for he loved you better than any man in the world; and I, for love of him, give you your life, your castle, and all that you have. I restore you to my friendship and good graces, and grant you besides five hundred marks of silver for the damage that has been done you."<sup>10</sup> There was a romantic generosity about Henry's temper, which accords well with the relation just given, whether it be in the main authentic or not.

The stroke which had just fallen upon Henry was somewhat lightened by a season of unwonted family harmony which followed. Geoffrey and Richard laid down their arms, and shook hands in token of reconciliation; and Eleanor, their mother, came forth from the prison

<sup>9</sup> Dante makes this Bertrand suffer, in his hell, a chastisement analogous to the figurative expression by which his crime was designated:

*I' vidi certo: ed ancor par, ch'io'l veggia,  
Un busto senza capo andar, &c.* Lib. I. cant. 28.

<sup>10</sup> Poesies des Troubadours, apud Thierry.

in which she had been kept for nearly ten years. But fresh trials awaited Henry's declining years. Geoffrey, being thrown from his horse in a tournament, was trampled to death by the horses of the other combatants. Richard, incited by French counsels, again took up arms against his father in Poitou; and John, his youngest and favourite child, abandoned him in the moment that fortune began to favour his brother. Worn out with incessant fatigue of body and mind, and broken-hearted at this last unnatural desertion, Henry expired at his castle of Chinon, on the 5th of July, 1184, in the 64th year of his age. The breath of life had scarcely departed from his body, before it was stripped and plundered by his domestics, and left for burial to the charity of strangers.<sup>11</sup> Eleanor, his infamous queen, survived him many years.

Henry was one of the most accomplished princes of his age. His uncle Robert, of Gloucester, himself a scholar of considerable reputation, had taken great pains with his education; and the tastes thus implanted in his early youth remained with him throughout his busy life. He is described by Giraldus Cambrensis, who was much with him, as devoting to reading and intellectual conversation every interval that he could spare from his royal duties and sports of exercise. His memory was peculiarly tenacious. He remembered almost all he ever read or heard, and never forgot a face which he had once seen. Both Eleanor and Henry liberally encouraged the Provençal poets, who spread the love of song and poetry wherever they wandered. The consequences of the royal tastes soon became visible in the improved education of the great, and the number of authors who appeared during this reign and the next. Many important changes of ancient usage and law were matured in Henry's reign, and have been generally supposed to have originated with him and his officers; but we cannot go back upon ground so fully reviewed in our introductory remarks to this section.

Henry's male offspring having been repeatedly mentioned, a brief account remains to be given of his female children. Matilda, his eldest daughter, was married to Henry the Lion, duke of Saxony and Bavaria, whom, when expelled from his territories by the emperor, his father-in-law liberally maintained for some years. Eleanor, another daughter of Henry, became the wife of Alphonso, king of Castile. Joan, his third daughter, espoused William the Good, king of Sicily, and, after his death, Raymond, count of Thoulouse. Besides his legitimate issue, Henry had two sons by Rosamond Clifford, surnamed the Fair, whose connection with him has furnished materials for romance. Geoffrey, his chancellor, was the younger of these; the other was created Earl of Salisbury.

<sup>11</sup> Script. Rer. Franc. Tom. xviii. p. 157.

## Richard Strongbow.

DIED A. D. 1177.

RICHARD DE CLARE, surnamed Strongbow, Earl of Strigul, or Pembroke, distinguished himself, during the reign of Henry II., by his adventures and success in Ireland. That country was, at this time, divided into five independent states,—Munster, Meath, Ulster, Leinster, and Connaught,—of which the kingdom of Meath, though the smallest in extent, was the most distinguished. Little communication had hitherto taken place between any of these states and the adjacent kingdom of England. The event, which brought them into hostile collision, sufficiently marks the rude character of the times. Dermot, or Dermot, king of Leinster, had, several years before, carried away by force Dervorgil, the wife of O'Ruare, prince of Leitrim. The lady appears to have been little averse to the transaction; but the insulted husband resented the indignity, by invoking the aid of his brother-chiefs, before whose united forces Dermot fled, and sought safety in exile.<sup>1</sup> Passing through England, he proceeded to Aquitaine, where he endeavoured to engage Henry in his quarrel, by doing him homage for his dominions. The English sovereign received him graciously, and granted him letters-patent, declaring that he had taken him under his protection, and authorizing any English subjects to assist him in recovering his kingdom. With these letters Dermot sailed to Bristol, where he entered into a negotiation with Richard De Clare, a nobleman of ruined fortunes, and lying at the moment under the displeasure of his sovereign. Dermot promised to bestow the hand of his daughter, Eva, upon De Clare, and with it the succession to his kingdom in the event of his reconquering it; and De Clare pledged himself to attempt the enterprise in the ensuing spring. After concluding this treaty, Dermot went into Wales, and there found another needy adventurer, Robert Fitz-Stephen, who was willing to engage with him. The city of Wexford, and two adjoining cantreds, were to be the reward of the Welshman's valour. Assisted by his Welsh allies, Dermot began the enterprise to recover his dominions, and was so far successful, that he soon began to aspire to the sovereignty of all Ireland. A pressing message was sent to Strongbow to accelerate his arrival, accompanied with such representations as could not fail to excite his ambition and cupidity. Giraldus has preserved one of Dermot's epistles to his ally. It is conceived in a tone little indicative certainly of the ferocious and savage character attributed to that chieftain. "We have seen," says he, "the storks and the swallows. The birds of the spring have paid us their annual visit; and, at the warning of the blast, have departed to other climes. But our best friend has hitherto disappointed our hopes. Neither the breezes of summer, nor the storms of winter, have conducted him to these shores." The English earl was indeed ready and eager for the enterprise; but, as the object was avowedly no longer the restoration of Dermot, but the conquest of the whole country, he durst not venture to embark in it without the permission of his sover-

<sup>1</sup> Girald. Hib. expugn. c. i. p. 760.—Lingard, vol. ii. p. 103.



eign, to obtain which, he went over to Normandy ; but, in the meantime, he despatched a reinforcement to Dermot, under charge of Raymond, a youth of his own family. Nothing can more forcibly imply the uncivilized state of the Irish at this time, than the success of this small band, consisting of only 10 knights and 70 archers. Though opposed by O'Phelan at the head of 3000 men, they utterly defeated their assailants, and slew above 800 of them. Giraldus describes O'Phelan's force as consisting of naked savages, armed with lances, hatchets, and stones, and who were powerless, therefore, before men armed with sword and shield, and well practised in military evolutions. Henry received Strongbow's application with a sneer, and seemed disposed to discountenance the attempt ; but, having at length let fall some expression, which might be construed into a kind of permission, the earl eagerly laid hold of it, and, hastening back to England, pushed his preparations with the greatest vigour. Before they were completed, he received positive orders from his sovereign to desist from his enterprise ; but, as he had already staked all upon the issue of his enterprise, he resolved to push it to the last, and, sailing from Milford-haven, landed near Waterford, on the 23d of August, 1170, with a body of 1200 archers and knights. Here he was joined by Dermot, and received his daughter in marriage, after which, their united forces marched against Dublin, and took that city by storm. A few months afterwards Dermot died at Fernes, and was succeeded, in the sovereignty of Leinster, by his son-in-law, Earl Strongbow, without any opposition. These successes alarmed Henry, who issued an edict, forbidding more adventurers to go to Ireland, and commanding the victors to return. Among others, Strongbow yielded to a power too great for him to resist, and reluctantly made his peace with his offended sovereign, by laying his conquests at his feet. Henry permitted him to retain a great part of the kingdom of Leinster, to be held of the crown of England, but took the city of Dublin, and all the towns on the coast, into his own hands.<sup>2</sup> Two years afterwards, Strongbow's services to Henry, during the rebellion of his sons, were rewarded by his appointment to the government of Ireland, in room of Hugh De Lacy, which appointment he held until his death, in 1177.

## Richard I.

BORN A. D. 1157.—DIED A. D. 1199

RICHARD, trained to war from his earliest years in Poitou, had obtained the epithet of the Lion, expressive of his indomitable courage, before the succession to the throne was opened up to him by the death of his elder brothers. War had become to him his natural element, and the encounter of martial hosts his most keenly relished pastime. Poetry, too, had flung her spells over him, and taught him to seek his best celebrity in the songs of the gay troubadour and the admiration of the young and the beautiful. It is not wonderful then that he soon abandoned the fascination of empire and the luxuries of royalty for the ro-

<sup>2</sup> Neubrigen. l. ii. c. 26.

mantic life of a crusader. He began his reign magnanimously by retaining and rewarding the ministers who, in their fidelity to his father, had most vigorously opposed himself; and loading his younger brother with riches and honours. He also released his mother from her long confinement, and affectionately placed in her hands an amount of power to which she had long been a stranger. Even Geoffrey, his father's natural son, was not forgotten, but rewarded for his faithful services to his parents with the bishopric of York. One event, however, occurred to disgrace his splendid coronation. The prejudices of the age which viewed the lending of money on interest as a base and usurious transaction, had conspired with the 'chivalrous ethics' of the day to render the Jews, not a by-word and a reproach merely, but objects of unaffected terror and hatred. Richard had already imbibed too much of the feelings and manners of the crusaders not to share in this prejudice; and on the day before his coronation was to take place, had issued an edict prohibiting Hebrew men and women to be present at the ceremony. A few of the leading Jews, notwithstanding, ventured themselves within the prohibited precincts. Their object was to present the new king with an offering from their nation, and perhaps to solicit a continuance of that protection which his father, though often importuned to act otherwise, had always extended towards them. One of the attendants discovered a Jew pressing into the hall and gave the alarm, whereupon the courtiers commenced a general attack on all the Jews whom they could detect within the building, and drove them with blows and contumely from the place. The mob without eagerly caught the example thus set them by their superiors, and animated partly by cupidity, partly by the intensity of their ignorant prejudices, began to wound and kill the defenceless men as they fled along the streets, and to follow them into their houses. The Jews took the alarm, and barricadoed their doors, but the rabble, now furiously excited, set fire to the houses, and consumed multitudes of the miserable creatures in the flames of their own dwellings. Glanville, the king's justiciary, in vain endeavoured to appease the rioters, and even Richard himself was baffled for a time in his efforts to disperse them.<sup>1</sup> The example thus set by the citizens of London was eagerly imitated in other places, as Lynn, Stamford, Lincoln, and York; and so far were the ministers of religion and the monks from disapproving of it, that the compiler of the *Annals of Waverley*, after relating the transaction, returns thanks to the Almighty for having thus delivered over so impious a race to destruction at the hands of his countrymen.<sup>2</sup>

The fame of the terrible Saladin was now ringing throughout Europe, and Richard burned with all a hero's impatience to encounter the man who had yet met with no rival able to withstand him in the field. But, for an expedition such as he meditated, immense supplies of money were necessary; and the measures to which he had recourse for raising them were not in every case of the most justifiable or honourable kind. To the mass of treasure found in his father's coffers at Winchester, amounting, according to some writers, to £900,000, he added all that he could raise from the sale of the revenues and manors of the crown; even the highest honours and most important offices

<sup>1</sup> Fleming, 517.

<sup>2</sup> Gale's Collect. vol. iii. p. 165.

were made venal ; and when some of his friends remonstrated with him at this dissipation of the royal revenues and power, he is said to have replied, " I would sell London itself, could I find a purchaser !"<sup>3</sup> For the small sum of 10,000 marks, he released William of Scotland from the oath of fealty and allegiance to the English crown, which Henry had extorted from him as the price of his ransom after taking him prisoner at Alnwick. Richard had promised to make his crusade in concert with Philip of France. The place of rendezvous was the plains of Vezelay, on the borders of Burgundy. Hither Richard hastened in the month of June 1190, after having appointed Hugh, bishop of Durham, and Longchamp, bishop of Ely, justiciaries and guardians of the realm in his absence. The assembled forces of the two monarchs amounted to 100,000 men ; and profiting by the sad experience of the leaders of former crusades, they wisely agreed to conduct their expedition by sea, instead of marching by land into the east. Philip took the road to Genoa, Richard to that of Marseilles, where he expected to meet his fleet. A storm had retarded the English vessels, but the impetuous monarch instantly put to sea, and sailed without it ; leaving directions to his army and fleet to follow him to Sicily without delay. The French reached Messina on the 16th of September, the English six days afterwards. The lateness of the season and the state of the weather suggested the expediency of wintering at Messina. But the resolution proved fatal to the harmony of the royal pilgrims. Tancred, prince of Sicily, saw and secretly fomented the growing jealousy as the best means of preserving the integrity of his own dominions, which both monarchs seemed disposed to use as their convenience suggested. He succeeded too well in his base policy, but the two monarchs, after many scenes of angry recrimination, became at last sensible of the imprudence of their quarrel, and agreed to reconcile differences, and pursue the common cause as brothers in arms.<sup>4</sup>

On the 10th of April, Richard sailed from Messina with a fleet of 55 galleys and 150 ships. A storm overtook them, and the ship which conveyed his sister, and the princess Berengaria of Navarre, his espoused, was driven into Cyprus, then governed by Isaac, a prince of the Comnenian family, who received the ladies with open marks of discourtesy, and afterwards treated Richard's remonstrances with contempt. Richard instantly landed his whole army to chastise the insolence of the petty chief, and having surprised Comnenus in his camp, compelled him to pay 3500 marks of gold, and to swear fealty to the English crown. On his subsequently manifesting a disposition to violate his engagements, Richard ordered him to be bound in chains of gold and silver, and confined in a castle on the coast of Palestine.<sup>5</sup> While thus engaged in Cyprus, Richard received a visit from Guy of Lusignan, king of Jerusalem, whose claim to that crown was now disputed by Conrad, marquess of Montferrat. Richard instantly espoused Guy's cause, and gave him 2000 marks to relieve his present necessities. Before the armament quitted Cyprus, Richard celebrated his nuptials with Berengaria, who was anointed and crowned queen of England on the same day, by the bishop of Evreux.

The siege of Acre had now lasted the greater part of two years ; and

<sup>3</sup> Guil. Neubrig. 396.

<sup>4</sup> Rymer's Fœd. vol. i. p. 69.

<sup>5</sup> Hoved. 393.—Isaac died a captive in 1195.



both the attack and defence had been conducted with the most determined bravery. The garrison, animated by the presence of Saladin himself, who, from the neighbouring heights, watched the motions of the besiegers, and receiving frequent supplies by sea, had hitherto baffled every effort of their assailants, of whom, we are told, upwards of 12,000 perished in the course of one year in this memorable siege.<sup>6</sup> Six archbishops, twelve bishops, forty earls, and five hundred barons, had fallen before this single stronghold, yet still fresh forces appeared to carry on the deadly struggle against the sword, famine, and pestilence. The arrival of the kings of France and England decided the contest. God—say the historians of the time—blessed the holy pilgrimage of these wise and pious kings; their pedereroes, their mangels, and their trebuchets, battered the walls of Acre so well, that a breach was made in a few days, and the garrison, consisting of 5,000 Saracens, obliged to capitulate. Saladin agreed to release 2,500 Christian prisoners, and, in two months, to pay 200,000 byzants as the ransom of the Turkish prisoners, and to restore the holy cross. The crusaders took possession of Acre, and Saladin removed his camp to a distance. But this success, though hailed by all Christendom as a prelude to the delivery of Jerusalem, did little to cement the friendship of the crusaders themselves. Not only Richard and Philip, but all the other chiefs, were divided among themselves by ambition, avarice, and pride. On the day of the capture of Acre, the two kings divided the town between them, and each of them planted the royal standard on his own portion. Leopold, duke of Austria, made the like attempt, but Richard immediately tore down his banner and threw it into a sewer. The duke immediately withdrew from the town, treasuring up his revenge for a favourable opportunity. Some time after, the marquess of Montferrat was assassinated at Tyre, in open day, by two Arabs, and the king of England was accused of having hired them. In the midst of these contentions, the king of France falling sick, believed or pretended to believe that he had been poisoned by the king of England; and on this and other pretexts relinquished the undertaking which he had vowed to complete, and sailed for France. The massacre of his prisoners at Acre, has stained the memory of Richard. It would appear that Saladin had delayed the first instalment of the ransom, and a rumour had reached the Christian camp that he had consummated his perfidy by putting to death all his prisoners. The Christian soldiers demanded permission to revenge the fate of their comrades, and their leaders assented to the proposition. The gallant garrison of Acre was divided into two bodies of 2,500 men each, one of which was led to the summit of a hill in sight of the Saracen camp, and there put to the sword by Richard's troops; and the other massacred on the walls of Acre by the troops of the duke of Burgundy. It sufficiently marks the character of the age, that a deed so bloody and barbarous as this was contemplated wholly without remorse by its perpetrators. "We have, as became us," says Richard in a letter to the abbot of Clairvaux, "put to death 2,500 of them."<sup>7</sup> "It was done," says Vinesauf, "with the assent of all."

Richard now conducted his army, reduced to 30,000 men, from Acre to Jaffa. Nothing could exceed the privations and sufferings of

<sup>6</sup> Vinesauf, 347.

<sup>7</sup> Hoved. 398.

the march, under a Syrian sun, over burning sands, and surrounded by clouds of fierce and savage horsemen. Richard's supplies of men and money were also fast failing him; and the most bitter dissensions, as usual, prevailed amongst his companion chiefs. Still, in the face of these obstacles, he pursued his course towards the holy city, and even reached Ramla, where the inclemency of the weather, the want of provisions, and the breaking out of pestilence in the camp, at last arrested his march, and compelled him reluctantly to turn his steps back to the coast. Again, he advanced upon Jerusalem, and again retreated upon Jaffa, whither Saladin followed him. It was before this town that the king of England gave the most signal displays of that indomitable courage and resistless prowess which earned for him the appellation of the Lion-heart, and the admiration of his fiercest enemies. At the head of a small army, with which he had returned to the succour of Jaffa, consisting of 55 knights, of whom 10 only were mounted, and 2000 infantry, he successfully resisted the impetuous attack of the whole Saracen cavalry, and, rushing with his men-at-arms into the midst of their squadrons, performed feats of superhuman strength and bravery, cutting down every single opponent, and often breaking his way through whole battalions of the enemy. Soon after this encounter, a truce was concluded for three years, by which the Christians were left in possession of the coast from Acre to Joppa, and free access to the holy sepulchre was secured to all pilgrims.<sup>8</sup> Thus fruitlessly terminated Richard's crusade. The tidings which had reached him that his brother John, supported by the king of France, was meditating the seizure of his Norman duchy, and that William de Longchamp, his chancellor, was abusing the power with which he had been intrusted in the absence of his sovereign, undoubtedly accelerated Richard's return home. But it is probable that he had also discovered, by this time, how totally unprovided he was for undertaking the siege of Jerusalem, and that in the presence of such a general as Saladin. On the 9th of October, 1192, Richard finally left the shores of the holy land; but his reputation as a warrior was long preserved amongst his gallant foes.<sup>9</sup>

The bulk of Richard's fleet reached England in safety, but his own vessel having been driven by a storm on the coast of Istria, he landed, and proceeded in disguise towards Friesach in Saltzburg, where he fell into the hands of the duke of Austria, who was subsequently compelled to resign his royal prisoner to the emperor Henry VI. Richard's situation was first discovered by his own chancellor, Longchamp, who had been driven into exile by the ambitious John, and who prevailed on the emperor to summon an assembly of princes at Haguenau for the purpose of hearing and determining the various charges which had been preferred from different quarters against Richard. These charges were: that he had supported the usurper, Tancred, in Sicily, to the emperor's great cost and damage; that he had unjustly driven Isaac, king of Cyprus, from his throne; that he had ill-used many German pilgrims;

<sup>8</sup> Vinesauf, 410.

<sup>9</sup> Joinville says that Richard's bravery had so deeply impressed the imagination of the Saracens, that, long after his death, his name was used as synonymous with a spirit of power and evil. Saracen mothers would quiet their children by exclaiming, "Hush! hush! Melech Rich (King Richard) is coming for you." And when a Turk's horse started at any thing, the rider would chide him, with "Cuides tu qu'y soit le roi Richard?" "Do you think that there is King Richard?"

and that he had hired assassins to murder the marquess of Monterrat. To these accusations Richard replied in a manly and energetic speech, which was received by the princes of the diet with great applause, and which induced Henry to consent to treat about his ransom. A convention was executed between the emperor and king, by which it was in effect agreed that Richard should receive his liberty on paying 100,000 marks of silver to the emperor. Longchamp was now despatched to England with a letter to the council of regency, calling upon them to adopt measures for raising and transmitting the stipulated ransom. To raise this sum, the plate of all the churches and monasteries was taken, and one-fourth of every man's income, and England, says an ancient annalist, "from sea to sea was reduced to the utmost distress." Meanwhile John and the French monarch did every thing in their power to detain Richard in captivity; but the interference of the German princes, who had become sureties for the release of the English monarch, compelled the emperor to observe his engagement, and on the 13th of March, 1194, Richard landed at Sandwich amidst the acclamations of his subjects, after an absence of more than four years.<sup>10</sup>

During Richard's absence from England, his brother John, prompted and supported by Philip of France, had disturbed England and Normandy by repeated insurrections. Richard now pronounced John an outlaw, and engaged in a series of military operations against Philip, which were pursued with little advantage to either party, until the death of Richard before Chaluz, the obscure castle of a rebellious vassal in Limousin, on the 24th of March 1199. His body was buried at Fontevraud: his lion-heart he bequeathed to the citizens of Rouen, in gratitude for their loyalty and attachment to him.<sup>11</sup>

Richard's fame was purely that of a warrior. When we have given him the praise of indomitable valour, his panegyric is finished. "He has been compared," says Mackintosh, "to Achilles, but the greatest of poets chose to adorn his savage hero with sorrow for the fate of Patroclus,—a sort of infirmity which cannot be imputed to Richard, who had, in every respect, the heart of the lion."

## John.

BORN A. D. 1167.—DIED A. D. 1216.

RICHARD died without legitimate issue. In the strict order of hereditary succession his crown devolved to his nephew Arthur, the son of Geoffrey, Richard's elder brother, and duke of Bretagne, whom Richard, when he entered on the holy war, had formally declared his heir apparent. But, while on his death-bed, Richard declared his brother John his successor, and bequeathed to him three-fourths of his treasures. Anjou, Touraine, and Maine, the domains of the Plantagenets, with Poitou, declared for Arthur: while Normandy and Guienne acknowledged John. In England, Archbishop Hubert, William the marshal, and the justiciary Fitz-Peter, supported John and procured his coronation at Westminster; but the French monarch made show of

<sup>10</sup> Hoved. 417.

<sup>11</sup> Ib. 449.



supporting the cause of the orphan Arthur, to whom he gave his daughter Mary in marriage.

A long and fruitless struggle with Philip marks the first years of John's reign. The controversy whether the Capets or the Plantagenets were to take the lead among the princes of France was thus revived, and the vigorous genius of Philip finally determined in favour of the house of Capet. But the fortune of war in the opening of the struggle favoured John, and placed his rival Arthur in his hands, who disappeared within a few weeks, and whose fate report ascribes to the dagger of his remorseless uncle. Whether the guilt of so foul a crime really rested upon John or not, it suited Philip's policy to affect to believe the charge, and to summon John, as duke of Normandy, to prove his innocence, in the presence of the French peers, of the crime of having murdered an *arrière* vassal of the French crown. John declined appearance, and the court pronounced judgment in absence, declaring that "whereas John, duke of Normandy, in violation of his oath to Philip his lord, had murdered the son of his elder brother, a homager of the crown of France, and near kinsman to the king, and had perpetrated the crime within the signiory of France; he was found guilty of felony<sup>1</sup> and treason, and was therefore adjudged to forfeit all the lands which he held by homage."<sup>2</sup> This sentence was followed up by the annexation of the counties of Touraine, Maine, and Anjou to the French crown in 1203, the duchy of Normandy in 1205, and the county of Poitou in 1206. The attempts of John to recover his domains were alike pusillanimous and imbecile. While, one after another, his strongest castles were falling into the hands of his powerful rival, he was leading a life of inglorious indolence, amidst a gay and voluptuous court, at Rouen; nor was it until the reduction of Radipont, in the vicinity of that city, that he awoke from his lethargy, and fled with precipitation to England. A truce was ultimately concluded between the two kings on the 26th of October, 1206, by which all the provinces north of the Loire were in effect ceded to the king.

This unfortunate contest with the French king was followed by another with the Roman pontiff, differing indeed in its object, but equally disgraceful in its result. A dispute had for some time existed regarding the right claimed by the monks of St Augustin's abbey in Canterbury to elect the archbishop of that see. This right was denied by the suffragan bishops of the province; and at the death of each successive archbishop, the contest was resumed between the two parties. The king always supported the prelates, whom he found more accessible to the influence of the crown, than the monks who, according to the genius of their order, were devoted to Rome; and the pope as naturally supported the monks. On the death of Hubert, archbishop of Canterbury, the monks, at the instigation of Pope Innocent, chose Stephen Langton to the vacant see. John declared that he would never allow Langton to set a foot in England in the character of primate; and the pope in return laid his dominions under an interdict, which was published at London by the three bishops of London, Ely, and Worcester. The churches were instantly closed; no bell was tolled; no service solemnly performed; the administra-

<sup>1</sup> *Felonia est delictum vassalli in dominum quo feudum amittitur.*—Du Cange in voc.

<sup>2</sup> Westm. 264.

tion of the sacraments, except to infants and the dying, was prohibited; and the dead were silently buried in unconsecrated ground. The interdict was even followed by excommunication and consequent deposition; but the laity seem to have been little affected by such solemn proceedings, and the only successful expeditions of John's reign, those against Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, were conducted during the period of his proscription by the Roman see. John might indeed have laughed at the impotent resentment of the holy father, had no monarch been found willing to undertake the execution of the sentence of deposition. But this was a piece of service which Philip of France readily undertook. A numerous army was summoned to assemble at Rouen, and an armament of 1700 vessels prepared to make a descent upon the English coast. John did not again remain an idle spectator of the storm which was gathering around him; but Pandulph, the pope's legate, so worked upon his fears, that he resolved rather to avert it by negotiation and compromise, than to brave its fury. He agreed to admit Langton to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and to repair all damage which the bishops and clergy had suffered at his hands: he also consummated his disgrace by taking the very same oath of fealty to the pope, which vassals took to their lords, and consenting to pay an annual tribute of 700 marks of silver for England, and 300 for Ireland. On the 15th of May, 1213, he put into the hands of the legate a charter subscribed by himself, one archbishop, one bishop, nine earls, and two barons, testifying that, as an atonement for his offences against God and the church, he had determined to humble himself, and had, therefore, not through fear or force, but of free will, and with the unanimous consent of his barons, granted to the pope and his rightful successors the kingdom of England and the kingdom of Ireland, to be held of him and of the Roman church in fee, by the annual rent of 1000 marks, with the reservation to himself and his heirs of the administration of justice, and the peculiar rights of the crown.<sup>3</sup> The nuncio, thereupon, intimated to Philip that he must no longer molest a penitent son, and faithful vassal of the holy see, nor invade a kingdom which was now a part of the patrimony of St Peter. The king of France received this intimation with high displeasure, and proceeded to indemnify himself for the expenses to which he had been put by the seizure of Flanders; but a fleet despatched by John, under the earl of Salisbury, defeated his design, and the independence of Flanders was preserved.

The third great event of this reign was still more memorable than either of the preceding. John had disgusted his barons by his pusillanimity, and enraged them by his insolent bearing towards their wives and daughters; his last act of submission to the pope excited their universal disgust and alienation, while his endless exactions and impositions discontented all ranks of men. His attempt on the honour of the beautiful wife of Eustace De Vesey, a distinguished baron, roused the barons to their first open act of resistance. On the 20th of November, 1213, an assembly of that body met at the abbey of St Edmundsbury, where they solemnly swore upon the high altar to withdraw themselves from the king's fealty, and to wage war against him.

till he should confirm by a charter the liberties which they demanded. They agreed that, after the festival of Christmas, they would prefer in a body their common petition, and in the meantime they mutually engaged to put themselves in a posture for obtaining by force of arms, if necessary, what they would first demand as a matter of right. Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, espoused the cause of the confederated barons, and undertook to communicate their demands to the king. On hearing them, the king, with a scornful sneer, exclaimed, "They might as well have demanded my crown!" and swore never to grant his nobles such privileges as would make himself a slave. The barons received the announcement of the king's determination with equal indignation, and instantly marched upon London, under Robert Fitzwalter, as their generalissimo. The pope in vain interfered to quell the rising storm, and issued a bull in favour of his vassal: John was left almost without a single follower, while the whole nobility and gentry of the kingdom, with the yeomanry and free peasantry, and the citizens of London, made common cause with each other. In this state of things, one only course remained for John to pursue. He informed the confederates that he was ready to grant their petition, and requested them to name a day and place for the conferences. On the 15th of June, both parties advanced to a place called Runnymede, on the banks of the Thames, where they opened a conference which lasted four days. An instrument containing the demands of the confederates, or the heads of their grievances, and the means of redress, was presented to the king, who, according to the custom of the times, directed that the several articles should be reduced into the form of a charter, and in this state promulgated as a regal grant.<sup>4</sup>

We have already attempted to show, in our historical introduction to this period, that this charter, so celebrated in history as the supposed basis on which are founded the liberties of Englishmen, although it contained some provisions in favour of the people, chiefly consulted the interests of the barons.<sup>5</sup> We will here present the reader with the views which one of our most enlightened statesmen has taken of this important document:—"Many parts of the great charter," says Sir James Mackintosh, "were pointed against the abuses of the power of the king as lord paramount, and have lost their importance since the downfall of the system of feuds, which it was their purpose to mitigate. But it contains a few maxims of just government, applicable to all places and times, of which it is hardly possible to over-rate the importance of the first promulgation by the supreme authority of a powerful and renowned nation. Some clauses, though limited in words by feudal relations, yet covered general principles of equity, which were not slowly unfolded by the example of the charter, and by their obvious application to the safety and well-being of the whole community.

"Aids, or assistance in money, were due from any vassal for the ransom of the lord, for the knighting of his eldest son, and for the marriage of his eldest daughter; but they were often extorted when no such reasons could be urged. Escuage, or scutage, was a pecuniary compensation for military service; but as the approach of war was an easy pretext, it was liable to become almost arbitrary. Tailage, an

<sup>4</sup> Rymer Fœd. i. 129.

<sup>5</sup> P. 173.



impost assessed on cities and towns, and on freemen who owed no military service, according to an estimate of their income, was in its nature very arbitrary. In this case, however, the barons showed no indifference to the lot of the inferior classes; for in their articles they require a parliamentary consent to the taillages of London and all other towns, as much as to the aids and scutages which fell upon themselves.<sup>6</sup> By the charter itself, however, taillage was omitted; the liberties of London and other towns were generally asserted. But it contained the memorable provision,—‘No scutage, or aid, shall be raised in our kingdom, except in the above three cases, but by the general council of the kingdom;’—<sup>7</sup> a concession which, though from motives unknown to us, was not so extensive as the demand, yet applied to bodies so numerous and considerable as sufficiently to declare a principle, which could not long continue barren, that the consent of the community is essential to just taxation; which, in the first instance, guarded against arbitrary exaction, and in due time showed the means of peaceably subjecting the regal power to parliamentary and national opinion. By the charter, as confirmed in the first year of the next reign, even scutages and aids were reserved for further consideration as grave and doubtful matters. But the formidable principle had gone forth.<sup>10</sup> Every species of impost, without the consent of parliament, was not expressly renounced till the statute called *Confirmatio Chartarum*, in the twenty-fifth year of Edward I., fourscore years after the grant of the Great Charter.

“To constitute this common council for the levy of aids, says the charter, ‘we shall cause the prelates and greater barons to be separately summoned by our letters; and we shall direct our sheriffs and bailiffs to summon generally all who hold of us in chief; and we shall take care to publish the cause of the summons in the same way, and give forty days’ notice of the meeting.’

“To the upper house of our modern parliament this clause is still perfectly applicable. From the lower house the common council of John’s charter essentially differs, in excluding representation, and in confining the right of concurrence in imposing taxes to the direct tenants of the crown. It presents, however, the first outline of a parliamentary constitution. The chapters on this subject, with others less important, were postponed till after further consideration in the charter of Henry III., on the alleged ground that they contained grave and doubtful matters. Whether this reason were honest or evasive we cannot positively ascertain; but, in that reign, as we shall soon see, a house of commons, such as the present, certainly was assembled.

“The thirty-ninth article of this charter is that important clause which forbids arbitrary imprisonment and punishment without lawful trial:—‘Let no freeman be imprisoned or outlawed, or in any manner injured, nor proceeded against by us, otherwise than by the legal judgment of his peers, or by the law of the land.’ In this clause are clearly contained the writ of habeas corpus, and the trial by jury,—the most effectual securities against oppression, which the wisdom of man has hitherto been able to devise. It is surely more praiseworthy in these

<sup>6</sup> “Simili modo fiat de taillagiis de civitate London, et de aliis civitatibus.” Art. Cartæ Regis Johannis, § 32.

<sup>7</sup> Mag. Chart. § 12.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Hen. III. Stats. of the Realm, i. 16.

haughty nobles to have covered all freemen with the same buckler as themselves, than not to have included serfs in the same protection :— ‘ We shall sell, delay, or deny justice to none.’ No man can carry farther the principle that justice is the grand debt of every government to the people, which cannot be paid without rendering law cheap, prompt, and equal. Nor is the twentieth section unworthy of the like commendation :— ‘ A freeman shall be amerced in proportion to his offence, saving his contenement, and a merchant saving his merchandise.’ And surely the barons must be acquitted of an exclusive spirit who subjoin, ‘ and the villain saving his waggonage.’ It seems to be apparent from Glanville,<sup>9</sup> that villainage was a generic term for servitude in the reign of Henry II., so that the villain of the great charter must have been at least a species of serf. The provision which directs that the supreme civil court shall be stationary, instead of following the king’s person, is a proof of that regard to the regularity, accessibility, independence, and dignity of public justice, of which the general predominance peculiarly characterises that venerable monument of English liberty. The liberty of coming to England and going from it, secured to foreign merchants of countries with whom this kingdom is at peace, (unless there be a previous prohibition, which Lord Coke interprets to mean by act of parliament,) even if we should ascribe it to the solicitude of the barons for the constant supply of their castles with foreign luxuries, becomes on that very account entitled to regard, inasmuch as the language must be held to be deliberately chosen to promote and insure the purpose of the law.

“ It is observable that the language of the great charter is simple, brief, general without being abstract, and expressed in terms of authority, not of argument, yet commonly so reasonable as to carry with it the intrinsic evidence of its own fitness. It was understood by the simplest of the unlettered age for whom it was intended. It was remembered by them; and though they did not perceive the extensive consequences which might be derived from it, their feelings were, however, unconsciously exalted by its generality and grandeur.

“ It was a peculiar advantage that the consequences of its principles were, if we may so speak, only discovered gradually and slowly. It gave out, on each occasion, only as much of the spirit of liberty and reformation as the circumstances of succeeding generations required, and as their character would safely bear. For almost five centuries it was appealed to as the decisive authority on behalf of the people, though commonly so far only as the necessities of each case demanded. Its effect in these contests was not altogether unlike the grand process by which nature employs snows and frosts to cover her delicate germs, and to hinder them from rising above the earth till the atmosphere has acquired the mild and equal temperature which insures them against blights. On the English nation, undoubtedly, the charter has contributed to bestow the union of establishment with improvement. To all mankind it set the first example of the progress of a great people for centuries, in blending their tumultuary democracy and haughty nobility with a fluctuating and vaguely limited monarchy, so as at length to form from these discordant materials the only form of free government

<sup>9</sup> Glanv. de Legibus et Consuet. Angl. lib. v. Lond. 1673.

which experience had shown to be reconcilable with widely extended dominions. Whoever in any future age or unborn nation may admire the felicity of the expedient which converted the power of taxation into the shield of liberty, by which discretionary and secret imprisonment was rendered impracticable, and portions of the people were trained to exercise a larger share of judicial power than was ever allotted to them in any other civilized state, in such a manner as to secure instead of endangering public tranquillity;—whoever exults at the spectacle of enlightened and independent assemblies, who, under the eye of a well-informed nation, discuss and determine the laws and policy likely to make communities great and happy;—whoever is capable of comprehending all the effects of such institutions, with all their possible improvements upon the mind and genius of a people, is sacredly bound to speak with reverential gratitude of the authors of the great charter. To have produced it, to have preserved it, to have matured it, constitute the immortal claim of England on the esteem of mankind. Her Bacon's and Shakspeares, her Miltons and Newtons, with all the truth which they have revealed, and all the generous virtue which they have inspired, are of inferior value when compared with the subjection of men and their rulers to the principles of justice; if, indeed, it be not more true that these mighty spirits could not have been formed except under equal laws, nor roused to full activity without the influence of that spirit, which the great charter breathed over their forefathers.”<sup>10</sup>

No sooner was the assembly at Runnymede dissolved, than John threw off the mask of complaisance which he had worn in the presence of his barons, and procured absolution from the pope from the oaths he had just taken. Innocent shortly after ordered Langton to excommunicate the rebellious barons,—an order which that enlightened primate refused to obey. With the assistance of mercenary troops, John was enabled for some time to make head against his rebellious barons, who, reduced to extremity, and menaced with the total loss of their liberties, had recourse to the very desperate remedy of offering the crown of England to Louis the eldest son of the king of France. The proposal was accepted, but before the strength of the two parties was fairly tried in the field, the death of John, which occurred at Newark, on the 18th of October, 1216, freed the nation from the danger to which it was equally exposed by his success or by his misfortunes. John died in the 49th year of his age. His portrait has been thus powerfully sketched by Lingard: “He stands before us polluted with meanness, cruelty, perjury, and murder; uniting with an ambition, which rushed through every crime to the attainment of its object, a pusillanimity which often, at the sole appearance of opposition, sank into despondency. Arrogant in prosperity, abject in adversity, he neither conciliated affection in the one, nor esteem in the other. His dissimulation was so well known, that it seldom deceived; his suspicion served only to multiply his enemies, and the knowledge of his vindictive temper contributed to keep open the breach betwixt him and those who had incurred his displeasure. Seldom, perhaps, was there a prince with a heart more callous to the suggestions of pity. Of his captives many never returned from their dungeons. If they survived their tortures, they were left to

<sup>10</sup> Hist. of Engl. vol. i. pp. 217—222.



perish by famine. He could even affect to be witty at the expense of his victims. When Geoffrey, archdeacon of Norwich, a faithful servant, had retired from his seat at the exchequer on account of the interdict, the king ordered him to be arrested, and sent him a cope of lead to keep him warm in prison. The cope was a large mantle, covering the body from the shoulders to the feet, and worn by the clergymen during the service. Wrapt in this ponderous habit, with his head only at liberty, the unhappy man remained without food or assistance till he expired. On another occasion he demanded a present of ten thousand marks from an opulent Jew at Bristol, and ordered one of his teeth to be drawn every morning till he should produce the money. The Jew was obstinate. The executioners began with his double teeth. He suffered the loss of seven: but on the eighth day solicited a respite, and gave security for the payment. John was not less reprehensible as a husband, than he was as a monarch. While Louis took from him his provinces on the continent, he had consoled himself for the loss in the company of his beautiful bride; but he soon abandoned her to advert to his former habits. The licentiousness of his amours is reckoned by every ancient writer among the principal causes of the alienation of his barons, many of whom had to lament and revenge the disgrace of a wife, or daughter, or sister. Isabella, to punish the infidelity, imitated the conduct of her husband. But John was not to be insulted with impunity. He hanged her gallants over her bed. She bore him three sons, Henry, Richard, and Edmund, and three daughters, Jane, Eleanor, and Isabella. His illegitimate children were numerous. Nine sons and one daughter are mentioned by historians."

### William, Earl of Pembroke.

DIED A. D. 1219.

At the time of John's death, William, earl of Pembroke, was marshal of England, and by his office at the head of the army. It was fortunate for the young monarch, and for the nation, that such a trust was at the moment placed in such hands, for the elements of discord were widely scattered throughout the kingdom, and nothing but the most prudent management could suppress their excitement. Pembroke had adhered with unshaken loyalty to John, during the lowest ebb of his fortunes, and he now warmly espoused the cause of his eldest son Henry, though only a child of ten years. His first act was to procure the coronation of the infant prince, for which purpose he carried him to Gloucester, where, on the tenth day after the decease of the late monarch, he caused him to be crowned by the bishop of Winchester, Exeter, and Bath, in presence of the pope's legate, and a few noblemen. On this occasion, knowing the aversion of the baronial party to coalition with the adherents of the old court, Pembroke addressed the assembled nobles in a mild and persuasive speech: "We have persecuted the father," he said, "for evil demeanour, and worthily; yet this young child whom ye see before you, as he is in years tender, so he is innocent of his father's doings. Wherefore let us appoint him our king

and governor, and the yoke of foreign servitude let us cast from us."<sup>1</sup> The day after the coronation, a proclamation was issued, in which the new king, after lamenting the dissension which had existed between his father and the barons—a dissension which, he said, he should ever desire to dismiss from his memory—promised to all his subjects a full amnesty for the past, and their lawful liberties for the future. This wise step was of course dictated by Pembroke, whose office naturally placed him at the head of the government during a minority; but in order to enlarge and secure his authority in the capacity of regent, a general council of the barons was summoned at Bristol on the 11th of November, in which Pembroke was solemnly chosen protector of the realm. To this meeting, Pembroke caused his pupil present a new charter of liberties based upon the great charter, which was revised for this purpose, and cut down from 61 chapters to 42. Among the more remarkable alterations adopted in the new instrument, were, besides the omission of every clause of a temporary nature, the suspension for further consideration of several clauses which appeared to bear hard on the ancient claims of the crown.<sup>2</sup> Some improvements were also introduced, and the ratification of the charter was upon the whole well received throughout the kingdom. This charter was again confirmed by the king in the ensuing year, with the addition of some articles to prevent acts of oppression by the sheriffs, and with ameliorated forest-regulations, by which offences in the forest were declared to be no longer capital, and the proprietors of land received the power of cutting and using their own wood at their pleasure. Several powerful barons, won by these and other politic measures of the regent, came over to Henry, among whom were the earls of Salisbury, Arundel, and Warrenne, with the protector's eldest son.

While Pembroke was steadily pursuing his wise and conciliatory courses, the French prince was disgusting his best adherents among the English nobility, by the distrust which he evinced of their fidelity. They gradually detached themselves from confederacy with the foreigner, and either retired to their castles, or hastened to join the ranks of the royalists. By these accessions, Pembroke was so much strengthened that he ventured to invest Montsorel, but retired before the approach of the confederate army, consisting of 600 knights, and 20,000 men, under the command of the count of Perche. The count elated with his success, instead of pressing upon the fugitives, marched towards Lincoln, and laid siege to the castle, which was gallantly held out against him by a celebrated heroine Nichola de Camville. Pembroke immediately assembled his forces at Newark, and having thrown a reinforcement into the garrison of Lincoln, attacked the confederates from without, at the same moment that a sortie was made from the castle. The confederate army assailed on both sides, gave way, and were cut to pieces; the count himself perished in the fight, and above four hundred knights and eleven barons fell into the hands of the victors. This victory, which decided the fate of England, was long known in the quaint language of the times as 'the fair of Lincoln.' On the news of this defeat, Louis, who was then besieging Dover which was valiantly defended by Hubert de Burgh, immediately retreated to London, where

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, p. 200.—Heming, 562.

<sup>2</sup> Blackstone's *Introd. to the Great charter*, p. 43.—Brady II. App. No. 145.

he shut himself up within the walls. The destruction of a French armament which had put to sea for his relief, annihilated the last hopes of Louis, and compelled him to negotiate for his personal safety. A treaty of peace was signed at Lambeth, by which the prisoners on both sides were liberated; an amnesty was granted to the English adherents of Louis, and that prince with his foreign associates was allowed to return in safety to France.<sup>3</sup> After the expulsion of the French, the prudence and equity of the protector's subsequent conduct greatly contributed to restore internal peace to the country, and to heal those wounds which such a long state of civil war had occasioned; but he did not long survive to witness the happy fruits of the pacification which had been chiefly brought about by his wisdom and valour. He died in 1219, and was succeeded in the regency by Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, and Hubert de Burgh. History has been sparing in her information regarding this eminent man; but from what she has recorded of his acts and measures, we are justified in regarding him as one of the most prudent and upright of English statesmen.

## Henry III.

BORN A. D. 1206.—DIED A. D. 1272.

IN the preceding memoir we have related under what auspices Henry succeeded to the throne, and the principal events which occurred in his minority under the regency of the earl-marshal. One of the earliest acts of Hubert de Burgh, the grand justiciary, who succeeded Pembroke in the regency, was to obtain a bull from the pope declaring his pupil competent to do all royal acts.<sup>1</sup> Hubert seems to have been driven to this step by the unruly proceedings of some powerful barons whom he despaired of suppressing by his own authority; but the consequences were rather increased dissatisfaction and violence on the part of the barons, many of whom openly set at defiance the authority of the king as well as of his regent. The loss of Rochelle, and the successes of Louis' arms in Poitou, suggested the necessity of an expedition against France, and a subsidy of one-fifteenth of all personal estates was obtained for this purpose in 1225; but the parliament assented to this aid only on the express condition that the charter should be again confirmed. In consequence of this constitutional bargain the great charter was, on the 11th of February, re-issued in parliament, and has ever since held its place at the head of English statutes. The expedition was unfortunate; and returned to England after having done little more than reduced and garrisoned the strongholds of a few Gascon lords.

After his return from France in 1231, Henry demanded and obtained a scutage from parliament; but in the following year was denied further aid by his barons. About this time he began to show dissatisfaction with Hubert de Burgh, who, after the close of the regency, had remained first minister. Hubert had hitherto maintained a complete ascendancy over the king's mind, and had used his in-

<sup>2</sup> Regner. I. 221.

<sup>1</sup> M. West. p. 282.



fluence for the best purposes. Faithful in emergency, and ever prudent in council, he had often stood his master in valuable service when more designing counsellors would have betrayed him to his ruin; but the king had forgot what he owed to his minister, and become weary of the influence which he felt his minister exercised over his mind. The nobility in general marked the change in the king's affections with delight, and exerted themselves to foment his growing dislike to his minister. De Burgh was charged with having secretly dissuaded the duke of Austria from giving his daughter in marriage to Henry; with having poisoned the earls of Salisbury and Pembroke; with having put to death a freeman of London without the form of a trial; and with some other offences of a most frivolous kind, such as of gaining the king's affection by enchantment, and of purloining from the royal treasury a gem which had the virtue to render its wearer invulnerable.<sup>2</sup> Hubert took sanctuary in the monastery at Merton; but was finally suffered to retire into private life.

Peter, bishop of Winchester, a Poictevin by birth, succeeded Hubert in the place of minister. The partiality which he evinced for his own countrymen, with whom he filled every place of honour or emolument in his gift, excited the dislike of the native nobility, who formed a combination against the minister, but his fall was accomplished at last by the influence of the church, not by that of the nobles. The archbishop of Canterbury represented to the king the dangerous consequences of his minister's partialities, and demanded his dismissal on pain of excommunication. Henry trembled before the threat, and adopted the alternative proposed: and the primate henceforward bore the chief sway in the government. But no remonstrances, even though carried to the length of threats, could ever prevail on the king to abandon his system of patronising foreigners; his court was filled with aliens; the chief benefices in the kingdom were conferred on Italian priests; and papal influence pervaded every department of the government. Henry's encouragement of foreigners, however, was not an unmixed evil. His reign connected England with Armenia, whose ecclesiastics fled thither from the invading Tartars; with Germany, whose emperor married Henry's sister; with Provence and Savoy, from which countries he and his brother had their wives; with Spain, where his son was knighted and wedded; with France, which he visited with much pomp; with the southern regions of France, Guienne, and Poitou, which he retained; with the countries upon the Rhine, where his brother went to obtain the empire; with the north of Italy, whither he sent knights to assist the emperor against Milan; with the south of it, by his intercourse with the court of Rome; with Savoy, whose count he pensioned; with Constantinople, whose exiled emperor sought his support; with Jerusalem, whither English crusaders still journeyed; and even with the Saracens, who solicited his aid against the Tartars.<sup>3</sup> This varied and extensive intercourse with foreign nations proved highly advantageous to English arts and sciences as well as to the external commerce of the nation.

In 1253, Henry applied to parliament for a new subsidy. His demands were for a time rejected, and the clergy embraced the opportu-

<sup>2</sup> M. Paris, p. 259.

<sup>3</sup> Turner's Hist. of Eng. vol. i. p. 365, 366.

nity to send a deputation of four prelates in order to remonstrate with the king on his frequent violation of their privileges, and the oppressions with which he loaded them and all his subjects. "It is true," replied the king, "I have been somewhat faulty in this particular: I obtruded you, my lord Canterbury, upon your see. I was obliged to employ both entreaties and menaces, my lord Winchester, to have you elected. My proceedings, I confess, were very irregular, my lords of Salisbury and Carlisle, when I raised you from the lowest stations to your present dignities. I am determined, henceforth, to correct these abuses; and it will also become you, in order to make a thorough reformation, to resign your present benefices, and try to enter again on a more regular and economical manner." The bishops felt the sarcasm, but pressed their demands, justly observing that the question was not how to correct past errors, but how to avoid them for the future. Henry knew the necessity of the case, and yielded with the best possible grace to the demands of his barons, lay and clerical, and the parliament in return agreed to grant him a supply, but not until he had ratified the great charter in the most solemn manner which the spirit of the times could suggest. All the prelates and abbots assembled with the peers in Westminster hall; the great charter was read aloud; sentence of excommunication was then denounced against all who should henceforth infringe upon its provisions; the prelates then, according to usage, threw their tapers on the ground, saying, "So let all be extinguished and sink into the pit of hell who incur this sentence;" and the king answered: "So help me God, I will keep all these articles inviolate, as I am a man, as I am a Christian, as I am a knight, and as I am a king crowned and anointed."<sup>4</sup>

But all these solemn promises were soon forgotten on the king's part, who speedily resumed his arbitrary practices, and again roused the universal indignation of all classes of his subjects. It was now apparent that no guarantee would suffice to protect the rights of the nation short of placing the administration in other hands than those of the perjured monarch. A parliament was convened at Oxford, at which twenty-four barons were chosen, twelve by the king's council, and twelve by the parliament, with unlimited power to inquire into and redress grievances, and to reform the state, subject, however, to the control of a parliament to be assembled thrice a-year, and who were to be informed of all breaches of law and justice throughout the country by four knights to be elected for that purpose in every county. A civil war was the result of these measures, in which Prince Edward gallantly supported his father's fortunes, and finally overcame Leicester at the head of the popular party. The remaining years of Henry's reign were undistinguished by any event of importance. He died in November, 1272, after a nominal reign of fifty-six years.

<sup>4</sup> M. Paris, 590.

## Richard, Earl of Cornwall.

BORN A. D. 1209.—DIED A. D. 1272.

PRINCE RICHARD, the brother of Henry, received the earldom of Cornwall on its falling by escheat to the crown. His ruling passion was to amass money, in which he succeeded so well as soon to become the richest subject in Christendom. But he was not always over scrupulous as to the means by which he sought to gratify his darling passion, and his cupidity at a very early period of his brother's reign, led to a misunderstanding between them. Richard had seized a manor which had been granted to one Waleran de Ties, on the pretext that it belonged of right to his earldom of Cornwall. Waleran complained to the king, who ordered his brother to reinstate him in his possession; but the earl refused to do so before the cause was heard by a jury of his peers, and judgment to that effect pronounced by them. Henry was peremptory in his demands, and the earl chose the alternative of going to war with his sovereign rather than yield to his orders. With the assistance of the earls of Pembroke, Chester, Warrenne, and others, he assembled an army which intimidated the king, who was obliged to compromise the quarrel by grants to his brother of much greater importance than the manor which had been the first ground of the dispute.<sup>1</sup>

The Romish church had found means to reduce the kingdom of Sicily to a state of feudal vassalage. After the death of Frederic II. the Sicilian succession devolved to Conradine, grandson of that emperor; but Mainfroy, a natural son of the emperor's, having got the government of the emperor's Italian dominion into his hands during the minority of the young prince, rejected the claim of the papal see, and set at defiance the whole power of Pope Innocent. In this state of things, his holiness bethought himself of making a tender of the crown of Sicily to the earl of Cornwall, whose immense riches he flattered himself would be thus placed at the service of the holy see, and enable it to support military operations against Mainfroy. But Richard had the firmness and prudence to refuse so dangerous a present when first offered, and had soon reason to value himself on his foresight. For, when Innocent made the same offer to Henry for his second son Edward, the thoughtless monarch grasped at the delusive proposal, and speedily found himself involved in an immense debt by his holy ally, while the crown of Sicily remained as remote as ever from his grasp.<sup>2</sup>

But Richard's prudence was not always proof against his ambition, and he was at last persuaded to embark in an affair which proved as chimerical and expensive as that of the reduction of Sicily. The imperial throne being vacant, the German princes, attracted by the immense opulence of the earl of Cornwall, invited him to become a candidate for that dignity. Dazzled with the lustre of the imperial crown, Richard, in an evil moment, accepted of the invitation; and, in April 1257, took his departure from England with a train of 40 gentlemen, carrying with him a sum of 700,000 marks, or about £8,000,000 of our present currency.<sup>3</sup> This immense sum was soon exhausted by the

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, 233.

<sup>2</sup> Rymer, i. 567.—M. Paris, 617.

<sup>3</sup> M. Paris, 639.



cupidity of the German princes, and the only return which Richard received for his profuse liberality, was the empty title of king of the Romans. Richard's absence from England on this fruitless expedition greatly weakened his brother's hands, and enabled the barons to carry into effect their plan of the council of twenty-four already mentioned. Nor was the king of the Romans allowed to return to England until he had sworn to observe the regulations established at Oxford.

In 1264, Richard was taken prisoner at the battle of Lewes, in which he commanded the main body of the royalists. His subsequent history presents nothing remarkable.

## Simon de Montfort.

DIED A. D. 1265.

AMONGST other foreigners whom Henry's well-known partialities attracted to the English court, was Simon de Montfort, second son of the earl of Montfort of infamous memory, who headed the crusade against the Albigenes. A large inheritance in England fell by succession to this family; but as the elder brother Amauri, the constable of France, enjoyed still more opulent possessions in his own country, and could not perform fealty to two masters, he transferred his right to Simon, his younger brother, who came over to England, did homage for his lands, and, being raised to the dignity of earl of Leicester, thenceforward acted a distinguished part as an English peer. This young nobleman enjoyed so great a degree of Henry's confidence and favour, that he received in marriage his sister Eleanor, countess-dowager of Pembroke. The marriage of this princess with a subject and a foreigner, was loudly complained of by the earl of Cornwall and all the native barons, but the king's favour and authority alone proved sufficient to support Leicester against all his enemies, until his own insinuation and address had won for him a party in the state sufficiently powerful to protect him from insult. He soon, however, experienced the fickleness of Henry's temper, who, for some reason of private offence, banished him the court, but almost immediately afterwards entrusted him with the command of Guienne, where he did good service to his royal master, but exercised such severity in his government that the inhabitants sent over commissioners to England for the purpose of impeaching him before the king. Henry, whose feelings had again taken an unfavourable turn towards Montfort, received the commissioners very favourably, and plainly discovered his solicitude that the charges preferred against him might be established. But Montfort had sufficient influence with his peers to obtain a full acquittal from them of the charges preferred against him by the commissioners, which so exasperated the king that, forgetting his own dignity, he began to load the earl with opprobrious language in the presence of the court which had just pronounced his acquittal. Montfort, naturally proud and passionate, gave the lie to his sovereign, and the affront was never forgotten by Henry, although Leicester was again admitted into some degree of favour and authority.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, 513, 560.

We have in another place<sup>2</sup> expressed our sentiments as to the motives which may have influenced Leicester in entering upon that course of bold and dangerous policy which resulted in extorting the provisions of Oxford from the unwilling but overawed monarch. It would lead us into a discussion greatly too long for our present purpose, were we to attempt to settle the question how far ambition, animated by the prospect of a crown brought within his view by his royal alliance, actuated the conduct of Leicester in this matter. The administration of the twenty-four guardians was a scheme devised, cherished, and chiefly supported by the policy and address of Leicester. If ambition was the secret spring of his actions, he met with a formidable opponent in the earl of Gloucester who headed a party which, though ostensibly pursuing the same public ends, never failed to set itself in opposition to the personal interests of Leicester. The success of his rival at one time induced Leicester to retire to France, but upon the death of the former, Leicester again returned to England, and received a new and valuable auxiliary in Gilbert de Clare, the son and successor of Gloucester, who resigned himself entirely to the guidance of the man who had been his father's most powerful rival. Henry had, unexpectedly, resumed his authority in the state, and dismissed the council of twenty-four; but the return of Leicester rallied the confederates, and the arbitration of the king of France alone prevented an instant civil war.

Both parties had solemnly sworn to abide by the decision of the French monarch. And on the 30th of February, 1264, Louis pronounced his award enjoining the restoration of all castles, provinces, and royal rights enjoyed by the crown before the parliament of Oxford, on condition of universal amnesty, and of the full enjoyment of the charter. But the barons, who saw in this decision no provision against a return of grievances, instantly rejected it as contrary to truth and justice, and the flames of civil war burst forth in every part of the kingdom. In the north, and in Cornwall and Devon, the royalists possessed the superiority; the midland counties, and the marches of Wales were pretty equally divided; but in the Cinque Ports, the metropolis, and the neighbouring districts, Leicester governed without opposition. Henry was joined by Comyn, Bruce, and Baliol, the lords of the Scottish borders, and the first successes were gained by the royalists. But on the 14th of May, 1265, the strength of the two parties was fairly tried in battle at Lewes, where the royalists sustained a complete defeat; and the king and his son being subsequently made prisoners, were compelled to confer the administration of the kingdom on the earls of Leicester and Gloucester. In this battle about 5000 men are said to have fallen on each side. Prince Edward afterwards escaped, and put himself at the head of the royalists, whose principal strength lay among the lords of the Welsh and Scottish borders. Leicester on his part, called in the aid of Llewellyn, prince of Wales.

In our historical introduction to this period we have adverted to the question, what share the earl of Leicester probably had in the introduction of the principle of popular representation into the British constitution. Whether he is justly entitled to the praise of this great practical

<sup>1</sup> P. 170.

discovery or not, and whatever might be his real motives in endeavouring to enfuse a larger proportion of popular elements into the national councils, it is certain that his measures were hailed by the nation at large as wise and generous, and won for his memory in subsequent generations, the honourable title of Sir Simon the Righteous.<sup>3</sup>

The escape of Edward proved the signal for a general rising among the royalists, who instantly secured to themselves the command of the Severn, and out-manceuvred Leicester, who with difficulty made good his retreat into Wales. On the 6th of August, 1265, a bloody battle was fought at Evesham between the prince and Leicester, in which the royalists, who were greatly superior in numbers, obtained a decisive victory. The old king who had been compelled to appear in the field by Leicester, was slightly wounded, and would probably have been killed, had he not cried out to his antagonist, "Hold fellow, I am Henry of Winchester!" The prince caught the voice of his father, sprung to his rescue, and conducted him to a place of safety. In his absence Leicester's horse was killed under him, and as he fought on foot he asked if they gave quarter. A voice replied, "There is no quarter for traitors." Henry de Montfort, his eldest son, fell at his feet; and the dead body was soon afterwards covered by that of the father. Of Leicester's partisans all the barons and knights were slain with the exception of about ten. His own body, after being mangled and mutilated, was buried by the king's orders in the church of Evesham abbey.

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## II. ECCLESIASTICAL SERIES.

### Lanfranc.

BORN A. D. 1005.—DIED A. D. 1089.

It is impossible to pursue the details of early English history, on the plan we have prescribed to ourselves, without occasionally giving a place in our biographical sketches to notices of some eminent men who, though foreigners by birth, became Englishmen by adoption, and exercised a powerful influence over the destinies of our nation by the prominent part which they acted in the church or state. Of such exceptions to our general rule, the present section will contain two or three distinguished instances: and the first we shall select is the celebrated Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury.

Lanfranc was an Italian by birth, and born at Pavia in 1005. At the age of thirty-seven he emigrated to Normandy, and soon after assumed the monk's habit in the abbey of Bec.<sup>1</sup> Here he opened a school, and in a short time obtained such high reputation as a teacher, that pupils flocked to him from all quarters of Europe. The 'Chronicon Beccense,' printed at the end of Lanfranc's works, says that he at first gained a hard livelihood in Normandy, and existed for some time in a state of the greatest poverty, yet this 'poor emigrant school-

<sup>3</sup> Fabian.—West. 395.

<sup>1</sup> Ord. Vit. 519.—Dupin, Cent. 11. c. 3.



master,' as Turner remarks, became the acknowledged cause of the revival of Latin literature, and the liberal arts in France.<sup>2</sup> Vitalis's testimony on this point is very direct and conclusive:—"Under this master the Normans first explored the literary arts. Before him, under the six preceding dukes, scarcely any Norman had pursued the liberal studies. They had not a competent teacher till God, the provider of all things, sent Lanfranc into the Norman territory."<sup>3</sup> His success as a teacher is said to have excited the envy of Berenger, then principal of the public school at Tours, and afterwards archdeacon of Angers, and to have been the secret motive which stimulated that eloquent and erudite writer, to eclipse his rival's fame, by becoming the founder of a new sect in the church. To whatever motives Berenger's conduct may be traced, it is certain that the controversy then occasioned was chiefly maintained betwixt himself and Lanfranc. There is reason to believe that the famous Gregory VII. studied at Bec under Lanfranc;<sup>4</sup> and we know that Pope Alexander, on Lanfranc's going to Rome to receive the pall, publicly expressed his gratitude for the instructions he had received from the archbishop while filling the humbler station of preceptor in a Norman abbey.<sup>5</sup>

In 1062, William, duke of Normandy, invited him to his court, and made him one of his confidential counsellors,<sup>6</sup> and abbot of his newly erected monastery of St Stephen, at Caen. Here he established a new academy, which soon became as much celebrated as his former one at Bec. Soon after William had seated himself on the throne of England, Lanfranc was elevated to the see of Canterbury, in the room of Stigand who had been deposed by the pope's legate. Thomas, canon of Bayeux, was at the same time appointed to the see of York. But the two archbishops signalized their elevation by a violent dispute as to their respective pretensions to the primacy of England, which was only settled by the intervention of the king and his council, who decided in favour of Lanfranc, and ordered York to make profession of canonical obedience to his brother of Canterbury,—a decision which was afterwards reviewed and confirmed in two great councils held in 1072.<sup>7</sup>

Lanfranc, of course, introduced his doctrinal views into the church of England. It would appear that the dogma afterwards called transubstantiation was little known in the island previous to the Norman conquest. But Lanfranc had taken too deep an interest in that article of belief not to urge its adoption wherever his influence extended; both before and after his elevation to the see of Canterbury, he preached, wrote, and disputed in its defence. Its general reception by the English priests was probably as much due to the influence of his station as to the subtlety of the logic employed in recommending it. It is difficult to say what share Lanfranc took in William's ecclesiastical reforms. He certainly enjoyed for a considerable period the confidence of his sovereign, but the Conqueror was accustomed to exercise his supremacy in church and state with a high hand, and probably seldom consulted his spiritual chiefs in questions of general polity. We can hardly suppose Lanfranc advising his sovereign to reject the demand of homage made by Gregory VII., or of his own free choice declining to

<sup>2</sup> Hist. of Engl. vol. i. p. 402.<sup>3</sup> P. 519.<sup>4</sup> Murat. Ann. Ital. 897.<sup>5</sup> Vita Lanfr. p. 11.<sup>6</sup> Gul. Pietav. 194.<sup>7</sup> Malm. p. 117. — Lanfr. opera, p. 300.

attend on the papal see when summoned to Rome by the holy father.<sup>8</sup> It is also matter of history, that our archbishop's interference in some affairs of state lost him the royal favour, and that he was ever afterwards regarded with a jealous eye by the Conqueror, whom he survived only for the space of one year and eight months.

Our early historians are loud in the praise of Lanfranc's wisdom, learning, and munificence. His liberality was certainly profuse, and is a sufficient proof of the great revenues of the see of Canterbury in that early age. In one year, his charities are said to have amounted to £500,—a sum equal to £7500 of our present currency.<sup>9</sup> He also expended large sums in building and endowing monasteries, and defending the immunities of the church. A remarkable suit which he successfully prosecuted against Odo, bishop of Bayeux and earl of Kent, put him in possession of no fewer than twenty-five estates which had been unjustly seized by that ambitious prelate.

Lanfranc's writings consist of commentaries on St Paul's epistles, sermons on various subjects, letters to the most distinguished personages of his time, and his famous treatise on the eucharist, against Berenger, which has obtained for him the most lavish encomiums from the literary historians of the church of Rome.<sup>10</sup> They were collected by father Luke D'Achery, a Benedictine monk, and published at Paris in 1648. Lanfranc was succeeded in his school at Bec, and afterwards in his archiepiscopal see, by Anselm, a man of still more distinguished talents, and to whom the early literature of England lies under still more extensive obligations.

## Anselm.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1034.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1105.

ANSELM, who was raised to the see of Canterbury by William Rufus, was a Piedmontese by birth, his native place being Aosta, a town at the foot of the Alps which then belonged to the duke of Burgundy. He was descended of a considerable family; and after having finished his studies and travelled for some time in Burgundy and France, he took the monastic habit in the abbey of Bec in Normandy, of which Lanfranc was then prior. When Lanfranc was made abbot of the monastery of Caen, in 1062, Anselm succeeded him in the priory of Bec, and when Herluin the abbot of Bec died, Anselm was promoted to the abbacy. The fame of his piety and learning first brought him to England, which he visited about the year 1092, at the invitation of Hugh, earl of Chester, who requested his spiritual consolation in his sickness.

Since the death of Lanfranc in 1089, the see of Canterbury had remained vacant, the king retaining the revenue in his own hands. Falling into a dangerous sickness he was seized with remorse of conscience; and being importuned by the clergy and nobles to make atonement for the multiplied sacrileges and misdeeds of which he had been guilty, he sent for Anselm to court, who then lived in the

<sup>8</sup> Greg. Epist. lib. ix. ep. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Gervase, Act. Pont. col. 1655.

<sup>10</sup> Hist. Lit. de la France, viii. 260—305.

neighbourhood of Gloucester, and nominated him to the vacant see of Canterbury. The appointment was far from according with the wishes of the pious Italian; he earnestly refused the dignity, fell on his knees, wept and entreated the king to change his purpose. The bishops expostulated, declaring his refusal to be a desertion of his duty; the king was urgent and pathetic, asking him "why he endeavoured to ruin him in the other world, which would infallibly happen in case he died before the archbishopric was filled up." Notwithstanding these touching appeals, Anselm's scruples were with great difficulty removed; and when the pastoral staff and ring were forced upon him in the royal presence, he kept his fist so fast clenched—a reluctance rare in modern times—that it required some violence on the part of his friends to open it, and induce him to receive the ensigns of office.<sup>1</sup> Before his consecration he obtained a promise from William for the restitution of all the lands and revenues which his see possessed in Lanfranc's time; and having thus secured the temporalities of the archbishopric, and done homage to the king, he was consecrated with great solemnity on the 4th of December, 1093. Shortly after his accession, he had a dispute with the bishop of London, as to the right of consecrating churches beyond the bounds of his own diocese. The controversy was referred to Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, the only Saxon prelate then living, who gave his opinion in favour of the archbishop's pretensions; and, in consequence, Anselm performed the ceremony of consecrating churches, and executing the other parts of his functions, in any of the towns belonging to the see of London, without moving for the consent of the diocesan. The reputation for piety, which Anselm had already acquired, increased greatly in England, from the vehement zeal with which he preached against abuses of all kinds, more especially those in dress and ornament. The fashion which prevailed in that age throughout Europe, both among men and women, was to give an enormous length to their shoes; to draw the toe to a sharp point, terminating with the figure of a bird's bill, or some such fantastic device, which was turned upwards, and not uncommonly fastened to the knee by chains of gold or silver. The clergy were scandalized at this sort of ornament, which they said was an attempt to belie the Scriptures, which affirm distinctly that no man can add a cubit to his stature. The pulpits denounced it with zealous indignation, and synods were assembled who absolutely condemned it. Yet such is the strange perversity of human nature, that the eloquence which could overturn thrones, and march armies of crusaders into the deserts of Asia, could never prevail against the long-pointed shoes! During several centuries, this mode maintained its ground; and had not the church ceased from her persecution, Europeans might have been still walking with their toes chained to their knees. Another extravagance of the toilette, peculiar to the eleventh century, was the long hair and curled locks worn by the courtiers. The eloquence of the archbishop was more successful in decrying this fashion, which would appear not to have taken such fast hold of the people's affections. He refused the ashes on Ash-Wednesday to these frizzled fops, and the consequence of his pious exertions was, that the young men universally abandoned their ringlets, and appeared in the

<sup>1</sup> Malm. 125.—Eadmer, p. 16—18.



cropt hair which was recommended to them in the sermons of the primate.

The cordiality between Anselm and the king was but of short duration. William had already cast an ambitious eye on the duchy of Normandy, which he intended to wrest from his brother Robert; and for this purpose he was endeavouring to raise all the money he could command. Anselm made him a tender of five hundred pounds, a present which the king refused, as too trifling to accept, and in a tone of displeasure, dismissed both the gift and the giver. Another cause of quarrel was the severity of the prelate's harangues against the fashions of the court. William's recovery from his illness had left no beneficial impression on his manners; and when Anselm waited upon him, and desired leave to convene a national synod, with a view to check the disorders of the church and state, as well as the general licentiousness of the people, the king not only refused his request, but treated him with such incivilities as compelled him and his retinue to withdraw from court. Fearing that the royal displeasure might impair his usefulness, the bishops entreated his majesty to receive him again into favour, and suggested to Anselm, that an offer of five hundred pounds, with a promise of as much more as soon as it could be raised, might restore him to the good graces of the king. This proposal the archbishop rejected, not only on the score of his own poverty, but from the meanness and impropriety of such a step. "God forbid," says he, "I should do any thing to make the world believe my sovereign's favour is mercenary! I owe the king allegiance, and ought to be tender of his honour. How then can I be true to these engagements, if I go about to bring an ill report upon his justice, and offer to buy his friendship with a little money like a horse at a fair? At this rate royal favour would be valued no higher than the proportion of the sum. But far be it from me to undervalue a thing of that dignity, and to put so paltry a consideration in balance against it! Your way, therefore, will be to persuade the king not to set a price on his reconciliation, but to receive me upon frank and honourable terms, and treat me as his spiritual father; and, for my part, I am ready to pay him the duty of a subject. But as for the money, since he was formerly pleased to refuse it, I have given it to the poor, and have now nothing more of that kind to offer."<sup>2</sup> The king was inexorable, and declared "he would never look upon Anselm as his ghostly father; that he hated his prayers and benedictions; and, therefore, he might go whither he pleased." But the most serious cause of discontent between William and his archbishop, arose from the disputed succession to St Peter's chair. There was at that time a schism in the church between Urban II. and Clement III., who both pretended to the papacy; and Anselm—who, as abbot of Bec, had already acknowledged the former—was determined to introduce his authority into England without the king's consent, who had refused to acknowledge Urban as pope. He even solicited permission to go to Rome and receive the pall at the hands of his holiness. These proceedings exasperated the king more and more, and gave occasion to very warm disputes. To put an end to the controversy, a council, or convention, was held at Rockingham

<sup>2</sup> Angl. Sac. Tom. i. p. 164.

castle. Anselm, in opening his cause, reminded the assembly with what reluctance he had accepted the archbishopric; that he had made an express reserve of his obedience to Pope Urban; and, therefore, it was hard that he should be brought under difficulties on that account. The bishops told him there was a general complaint against him for intrenching on the king's prerogative, and were of opinion he ought to resign himself wholly to the royal pleasure. His grace of Durham, who managed the argument for the court, insisted that the nomination of the pope to the subject was the principal jewel of the crown; and that by this privilege the kings of England were distinguished from the rest of the princes of Christendom. The issue of this conference was, that a majority of the prelates, in violation of their canonical obedience, renounced Anselm for their archbishop, and, in consequence, the primate requested permission to go beyond sea till the unfortunate misunderstanding could be made up. But the king peremptorily refused, and would only consent that there should be a kind of truce, or suspension, of the affair, from March till Whitsuntide.<sup>3</sup> Long before the expiration of this term, William broke the engagement, banished several clergymen who were Anselm's favourites, and miserably harassed the tenants of his see. His intention was to depose Anselm; but his suffragans declared that, without the papal authority, they knew of no expedient for inflicting that punishment on the primate of England. Anselm was exceedingly mortified at the desertion of the prelates, and the ill-treatment he had received, but no entreaty, or remonstrance, could soften him into compliance. Meantime, a deputation consisting of three ecclesiastics had been privately despatched to Rome to inquire into the late election, and examine which of the two pretenders was canonically chosen. Finding that Urban was the rightful pontiff, William transferred his allegiance from Clement; and having thus far gratified the see of Rome, he hoped the pope's legate would return him the favour by procuring the deposition of Anselm. Here, however, he was completely disappointed; but he had gone too far to retreat. He resolved, therefore, to put the best appearance on the matter, and, since he could not have his revenge upon the primate, to drop the dispute, and effect a reconciliation. By the advice of the barons, who had refused to follow the example of the suffragans in disclaiming their archbishops, Anselm was restored to favour upon his own terms; but he still refused to receive the pall from the king's hands. To solve this dilemma, it was at last agreed that the pope's nuncio, who had brought the pall to England—with secret instructions, probably concerning the disposal of it—should carry it down to Canterbury, and lay it upon the altar of the cathedral, from whence Anselm was to receive it as if it had been put into his hands by St Peter himself. This ceremony was accordingly performed with great solemnity, in the month of June, 1095.

Matters being thus adjusted, it was generally hoped that all occasion of difference between the king and the primate was removed; but it soon appeared that their reconciliation was not cordial. William had undertaken an expedition against Wales, and he required the archbishop to furnish his quota of troops for that service; but An-

<sup>3</sup> Eadmer, p. 31.

selm, who regarded the demand as an oppression on the church, though he durst not refuse compliance, sent his detachment so miserably accoutred and inefficient, that the king was extremely displeased, and threatened to have him publicly tried for a misdemeanour. To this menace Anselm made no reply, but he demanded positively, that all the revenues of his see should be restored to him, and appealed to Rome against the king's injustice. Intending to consult his holiness in person, he solicited permission to leave the kingdom, which the king refused with a bitter sarcasm, "that he could not imagine the archbishop had been guilty of any crime that needed the pope's absolution, and as for consultation, he had so good an opinion of his judgment, that he considered him every jot as well qualified to give advice to the Romish pontiff as to receive it." He then applied to the bishops to intercede for him, but with no better success. "We know you," said these worldly-minded prelates, "to be a very religious and holy man, and that your conversation is wholly in heaven; but as for ourselves, we must confess, our relations and secular interests are a clog upon us, insomuch that we cannot rise up to those seraphic flights, nor trample on the world with the noble contempt that you do. If you please to stoop to our infirmities, and content yourself with our methods and management, we will solicit your cause with the same heartiness we do our own. But if you are all spirituality, and have nothing but the church in view, all we can do is to preserve our former regards to you, and that with a reserve of acting nothing which may intrench upon our allegiance to the king." Notwithstanding this, Anselm resolved upon the voyage, and after taking a ceremonious leave of the court, he embarked at Dover, whence he got safely to Rome, and was honourably received by the pope. When the king heard he had crossed the channel, he seized on all his temporalities, and made void every thing he had done. During his stay in Rome, which was short, Anselm accompanied Urban to a country-seat near Capua, whither his holiness retired to avoid the unhealthiness of the town. Here he wrote a book, in which he gave an account of our Saviour's incarnation, and preached in different parts of Italy with so good effect, that he offered to resign his see, believing he might be more serviceable to religion in a more private station. But the pope would by no means consent to such a step, and charged him, upon his obedience, never to quit his title, or abandon his office. He was treated with great respect by Urban, who considered him a martyr in the cause of truth, and even threatened the English monarch, on account of his proceedings against the archbishop and the church, with the sentence of excommunication. He wrote to William in a strain of authority, requiring him to reinstate Anselm in all the profits and privileges of his see; while his majesty, on the other hand, endeavoured to get the primate discountenanced abroad, and for that purpose, corresponded with Roger, duke of Apulia, and others; but this attempt had no effect in diminishing his popularity at the court of Rome. His assistance was of considerable service to the pope at the famous council of Bari, which was held for opposing the errors of the Greek church, with respect to the Holy Ghost; and when the right of election to church preferment was declared to belong to the clergy alone, and spiritual censures were denounced against all ecclesiastics who did homage to laymen for their



sees or benefices, and against all laymen who exacted it. In this synod, Anselm has the praise of having answered the objections of the Greek fathers, and managed the argument with so much judgment, learning, and penetration, that he completely silenced his adversaries, and gave general satisfaction to the western church. In the same council he is said to have interposed, to prevent Urban from pronouncing sentence of excommunication against the king of England, for his frequent outrages against religion; but his generosity met with a very sorry requital. On his return to Rome, he found an ambassador from England had arrived, in order to disprove Anselm's allegations and complaints against his master. The pope lent but an indifferant ear to the defences and repetitions of the messenger. The historian of Malmshury tells us, with a good deal of satire, and perhaps of truth, that his holiness was under some difficulty and irresolution about the matter; that, for some time, he hung in suspense between conscience and interest, but at last his scruples were overbalanced by the receipt of a handsome sum of money, and the promise of something additional,—considerations which have often led to the sacrifice, both of justice and honour. Finding that the court of Rome had deserted him, Anselm would have returned to Lyons, but the pope would not admit his departure, and by way of compensation for his disappointments, he allowed him the use of a splendid palace, where he frequently honoured him with a visit. A council having been summoned to sit at Rome, Anselm had a very honourable seat assigned him and his successors, this being the first time that an archbishop of Canterbury had appeared in a Roman synod. His case was pointedly alluded to by the bishop of Lucca, who remonstrated against the delays in doing him justice. When the council broke up, he immediately repaired to Lyons, where he was entertained for some time by Hugo, the archbishop; and here he remained till the death both of King William and the pope, which happened not long after.

Henry I. having restored the revenues and prerogatives of the sees of Canterbury, Winchester, and Salisbury, which had been seized by his predecessor, and sensible of the great authority which Anselm had acquired by his character for piety, and the persecutions he had suffered under William, sent repeated messages to Lyons, inviting him to return to England and take possession of his dignities. The king went so far as to excuse himself for being crowned by another prelate, Maurice, bishop of London, having in his absence ventured to officiate on that occasion. Anselm was received with extraordinary respect, both by the king and the people; and matters went on smoothly enough until Henry proposed to him the renewal of that homage which he had done his brother, and which had never been refused by any English bishop. Anselm had acquired other sentiments by his journey to Rome, and he gave the king a direct refusal, alleging the decrees of the synod of Bari, which excommunicated all ecclesiastics who should receive investitures from lay hands, and that, so far from doing homage for his spiritual dignity, he would not communicate with any of the clergy who should yield to pay that submission, or receive promotion from a layman. Henry, who was not yet firmly settled on the throne, and had expected to reap great advantages from the authority and influence of Anselm, durst not insist on his demand; he only desired that the controversy might be

suspended till the Easter following, and that messengers might be sent to Rome, in order to accommodate matters with the pope, and try, if possible, if they could persuade his holiness to dispense with the canons of the late synod, in regard to investitures in England. During this truce, the important affair of Matilda's marriage,—already noticed in our sketch of Henry I.—occurred. Anselm had soon after another opportunity of being of signal service to Henry, when England was invaded by Robert, duke of Normandy, who landed with a formidable army at Portsmouth. In this emergency, the archbishop not only furnished the king with a large body of men, but was likewise very active in preventing revolt from spreading among the chiefs and nobles. He assured them of the king's sincerity in those professions he had made of avoiding the tyrannical and oppressive government of his father and brother; he even rode through the ranks of the army, recommended to the soldiers the defence of their prince, represented to them the duty of keeping their oaths of allegiance, and prognosticated the great happiness that must result from the government of so wise and just a sovereign. By this expedient added to the influence of some of the leading nobility, the barons and the army were retained in the king's interest. Having conquered Normandy, Henry had leisure to finish the controversy which had long been depending between him and the pope, with regard to the investitures in ecclesiastical benefices; and though he was here obliged to relinquish some of the ancient rights of the crown, he extricated himself from the difficulty on easier terms than most princes, who in that age were so unhappy as to be engaged in disputes with the apostolic see. The king's situation in the beginning of his reign had obliged him to pay great court to Anselm; and the advantages he had reaped from his zeal might have laid the foundation of a lasting friendship, had the quarrel about investitures been previously arranged. But the agents which he had sent to Rome, in order to compound the matter with Pascal II. returned with an absolute refusal of the king's demands. Pascal quoted scripture, and reasoned on the monstrous proposal of introducing ecclesiastics into the church, through civil magistrates or profane laymen. These arguments could not convince Henry, or persuade him to resign so important a prerogative. In this dispute the majority of the bishops and temporal nobility were on the court side, and some of them urged the king to break entirely with the court of Rome. This dangerous extremity, however, he was anxious to avoid, or at least to delay; and therefore, with the consent of Anselm, he proposed to make a trial of further negotiation with the pope; three bishops were despatched to Rome, with instructions to offer his holiness this alternative,—either to depart from his former declaration, and relax in the point of investitures, or be content with the banishment of Anselm, as well as to lose the obedience of the English, and the yearly profits accruing from that kingdom. At the same time Anselm sent two monks, messengers of his own, to inform the pope of the real state of matters, and be more fully assured of that pontiff's intentions. The representations of the English ambassadors were of no avail; their royal master, they said, would rather part with his crown than renounce the right of granting investitures. "And I," replied Pascal, "would rather lose my head, than allow him to retain it." The letters which he wrote back were equally positive and arrogant, both to the king and the pri-

mate; accusing the former, by assuming such rights, of committing a kind of spiritual adultery with the church, who was the spouse of Christ; and insisting with the latter that the pretension of kings to confer benefices was the source of all simony. Henry had now no other expedient than to suppress the letter sent to himself, and induce the three bishops to prevaricate, and assert upon their episcopal honour, that Pascal I. had assured them, at a private audience, of his good intentions towards Henry; and that if his majesty gave satisfaction to the court of Rome in other matters, the church would indulge him in the privilege of investitures, and not excommunicate him for giving bishops and abbots the pastoral staff; and that the reason why his holiness had not mentioned this favour in his bull was, lest it should come to the knowledge of other princes, who would be apt to insist on the same prerogatives. Anselm's two monks gave a different account of the embassy, and asserted that the pope had given no verbal answer in contradiction to his own letters, and that there could be no secret negotiation without their privacy. The barons and nobility were divided, some maintaining that the testimony of the monks ought to be received, and that the hand and seal of the pope could not be questioned. Others were of opinion that the parole evidence of these prelates ought to be taken before that of a scroll of parchment, blackened over with ink, with a bit of lead at the end of it. The latter sentiment prevailed; and the king, as if he had finally gained his cause, proceeded to fill the sees of Hereford and Salisbury, and to invest the new bishops in the usual manner. But Anselm gave no credit to the asseverations of the king's messengers, and refused not only to consecrate the new prelates, but even to communicate with them, while the bishops themselves finding how odious they were become, returned to Henry the ensigns of their dignity. The quarrel every day increased, the king menacing any who should oppose him in the exercise of the ancient prerogatives of the crown.

Anselm hereupon desired leave to make a journey to Rome to lay the case before the sovereign pontiff, a permission which Henry readily granted, being well pleased to rid himself without violence, of so inflexible an antagonist. The archbishop was attended to the shore by infinite multitudes, not only of monks and clergymen, but people of all ranks, who scrupled not in this manner to declare for their primate against their sovereign. The king immediately seized all the revenues of his see, and sent William de Warelwast to negotiate with Pascal, and try to bring this troublesome affair to some accommodation. All he could procure was a very ceremonious letter from his holiness to the king of England, entreating him to waive this contest, and promising all reasonable compliance in other matters. Anselm finding it not prudent or safe to return, unless he was resolved to conform to the laws and usages of the kingdom, took up his residence at Lyons, in the hope that Henry would at last be obliged to yield the point. In this he was mistaken: the king persisted in his claims, notwithstanding the pope had excommunicated some of the English court who had espoused the cause of the crown, and even threatened Henry himself with the ban of the church. Perceiving little chance of a speedy decision, the primate removed from Lyons, and made a visit to the countess Adela, the Conqueror's daughter, at her castle in Blois. The princess inquiring into the business of his journey, he told her that after a great deal of



trouble and patience he must now be forced to excommunicate the king of England. Alarmed at the prospect of her brother's eternal damnation, the countess, who was a lady of great piety, wrote to Pascal, earnestly soliciting an accommodation.<sup>4</sup> Meantime Henry had arrived in Normandy, and hearing that Anselm intended to excommunicate him, he desired his sister to bring him with her, promising also to relax in several articles. Anselm accordingly waited on the king at his castle of Aigle, where he was received with great respect; and with the view of subduing his opposition, he had the revenues of his see restored to him, but he was not permitted to return to England unless he would agree to comply in the matter of investitures. The long absence of the archbishop gave the people and the prelates of England occasion of severe remonstrance on the score of his neglecting the interests of his diocese. While at Lyons he received a sharp epistle from a monk, acquainting him with the lamentable condition of the province of Canterbury; that all places were over-run with violence and injustice,—that the churches were harassed and oppressed, and the consecrated virgins violated,—that if the archbishop had maintained the ancient discipline, such disorders had not happened, but by quitting the kingdom he had given great advantages to the enemies of religion, and let in the wolves upon the sheep. He took the freedom to acquaint the primate that his conduct had formed a very unfortunate precedent, and that the blackest prospect of torture and death could not have excused his withdrawing himself. During his stay in Normandy, the same complaints were renewed; letters from his friends and suffragans in England were repeatedly sent, setting forth the deplorable state of the church, and urging the necessity of his speedy return. The total extinction of Christianity, they told him, was likely to ensue from the want of his fatherly care; that the most shocking customs prevailed in England; the wearing of long hair and pointed shoes had gained ground amongst all ranks of men, besides other vices two odious to mention; and that from the dread of his severity being removed, these enormities openly appeared every where, without sense of shame or fear of punishment. Anselm told the bishops that, however willing, it was not in his power to return, till the proceedings of the court of Rome should have come to a termination. He was sorry to be informed of the decline of piety and discipline, and had remonstrated with the king for converting the sins of the clergy into a source of private emolument. Among other violations of the canons during his absence, was the carnality of the priests and secular monks, who had been enjoined celibacy by the late synod of London, but the favourable opportunity had tempted them to break through the injunctions of the church, and many of them were married. This liberty the king, who took every method of collecting money, turned to his advantage by compelling them to pay a fine. Anselm remonstrated against this invasion of his jurisdiction as equally criminal with the marriage of the clergy; and assured Henry that money raised by such indefensible means would not only be unserviceable for temporal purposes, but endanger his eternal salvation. At length the pope condescended to make some advances towards gratifying the king of England, and sent a decision more agreeable than the former; and though he would not

<sup>4</sup> Eadmer, p. 79.

give up the point of investitures, he dispensed so far as to give the bishops and abbots leave to do homage for their temporalities. This decision separated a question which had long been confounded, and occasioned many wars and negotiations between the pope and the sovereigns of Europe. Investiture and homage were distinct ceremonies, both of which bishops had been accustomed to pass through before taking possession of their dignities. The former was the sacred symbol of their office, and consisted in being presented with a ring and crosier; the latter was the submission which, by the feudal law, vassals were required to perform to their superiors for the tenure of their lands. The former character it was the property of the church alone to confer, princes had no cause to interfere, nor could it prejudice their rights though conferred without their consent; the latter belonged to kings as temporal lords, and they might justly accuse the church of usurpation, in vesting any person in the possession of lands dependent on that crown without their approbation or authority. This distinction of rights, both parties were equally unwilling to recognise, because both found their respective advantages in confounding them. In the present instance Pascal was well-satisfied to have made this acquisition which he hoped in time would involve the whole; while Henry, anxious to procure a feasible escape from a very delicate situation, was content to retain some authority, though less absolute, in the election of his prelates. Anselm was immediately invited home, but being then attacked with sickness, the king himself paid him a visit at the abbey of Bee, where all differences were amicably adjusted.<sup>5</sup> On his recovery he embarked for England and landed at Dover, where he received the most extraordinary marks of welcome.

The only other incident of a public nature in the life of this famous archbishop, was his contest with Thomas elected to the primacy of York, and who, like his predecessors, made an attempt to disengage himself from his dependency upon the see of Canterbury. In concert with his chapter, Thomas thought the present crisis a favourable opportunity for his design. He saw Anselm was grown old, and if he could possibly defer his consecration till after his death, the point might probably be carried, for it was believed that the see of Canterbury would not be immediately filled, and thus the customary profession of canonical obedience must of necessity be dispensed with, as there would be no archbishop to demand it. Anselm saw through his design, and wrote to all the bishops prohibiting them either to consecrate or communicate with him. But before the affair was brought to a termination, he died, at Canterbury, A. D. 1105, in the 71st year of his age. The bishops however resolved to obey his last directions, and the king concurring in opinion with them, Thomas thought fit to comply; and having made his submission to the see of Canterbury, was consecrated archbishop of York.

Anselm was author of several pieces, of which Cave enumerates not fewer than thirty-seven. The largest edition of his works is that published by Father Gerberon at Paris, in 1675. It is divided into three parts, which include his tracts chiefly in scholastic divinity, and four books of letters. "We do not find," says Dupin, "any ecclesias-

<sup>5</sup> Vie Pascal.—Pagi Vit. Pascal 11.

tical writer who started so many metaphysical questions, or argued with the appearance of so much logic as he has done. He was the first also who composed long prayers in the form of meditations. His letters are written in a less elaborate style; neither are they so correct as his other works. His exhortations are plain homilies, interspersed with a great many mystical notions, in which there is neither much rhetoric nor morality. He does not seem to have been a great master in primitive divinity, though he had read St Augustine's works, and borrowed many principles from them." As to his character, Malmesbury tells us he was a person of great strictness and self-denial; his temper and sedateness were such, that after he turned monk he never was heard to utter the least reproachful word. The history of this prelate's life is important as affording a striking view of the grand object of the disputes between the popes and the princes of that age; and though he was undoubtedly a man of talent and piety, he was an obstinate partisan of the catholic church, whose interests he had more at heart and understood better than either the principles of civil government or the constitution of England. In the reign of Henry VII. Anselm was canonized at the instance of Cardinal Morton, then archbishop of Canterbury. Like other saints, he became a famous worker of miracles. John of Salisbury tells us of a Flemish nobleman that was cured of a leprosy by drinking the water in which this holy man had washed his hands in celebrating the mass. The same author adds, that he extinguished fires, calmed tempests, and healed diseases, merely by making the sign of the cross; that he rescued a hare which had taken refuge under his horse's feet by commanding the dogs not to pursue her any more; that two soldiers were cured of an ague, by tasting the crumbs of some bread he had been eating; that by dint of prayer he produced a spring of excellent water at the very summit of a hill, for the relief of certain villagers; and that a ship in which he sailed having a large hole in one of her planks, nevertheless took in no water so long as he remained on board! His tomb was also endowed with miraculous virtues, and we are gravely assured that a monk of Canterbury was restored to health, by paying his devotions at the spot; that one born dumb, blind, and deaf, received sight, hearing, and speech, by the same means; that a soldier was cured of a dropsy, by winding the saint's girdle about his body; and that the same girdle was successfully employed in assisting women in child-birth. These idle stories are scarcely deserving of notice, and the recital of them can only serve to show the credulity of the age in which the accounts of them were written. Like other fables of the same kind, they are the invention of bigots, who lived long subsequent to the pretended wonders they relate; the miraculous virtues of Anselm were not discovered till nearly a hundred years after his decease.

## Pope Adrian IV.

DIED A. D. 1159.

ADRIAN IV., whose original name was Nicholas Brekespere, was the only Englishman who ever occupied the papal throne. He was



born at Langley, near St Albans, in Hertfordshire, towards the close of the eleventh century. His father, Robert de Camere, was a domestic servitor in the monastery of St Albans, and ultimately a brother. Nicholas, while a youth, was obliged to perform the most menial offices for his daily bread. After some years spent in this way, he expressed a wish to take the habit of the monastery; but his poverty not having permitted him to obtain the requisite knowledge at the schools, the abbot, Richard, rejected him. "Wait my son," said he, "till you are better qualified." Such, at least, is the account which Matthew Paris gives us of this affair. Pitts, however, attributes young Brekespere's disgrace not to his lack of knowledge, but to the abbot's want of judgment; and considering Adrian's known talents, and what is still more to the purpose, the very moderate share of information which was necessary to qualify a man for a monastery in those days, this seems the more probable account of the two. "Adrian was," says Pitts, "a handsome and comely youth, of a sharp wit and ready utterance; circumspect in all his words and actions; polite in his behaviour; neat and elegant; full of zeal for the glory of God, and that according to some degree of knowledge; so possessed of all the most valuable endowments of mind and body, that in him the gifts of heaven exceeded nature; his piety exceeded his education; and the ripeness of his judgment, and his other qualifications, exceeded his age." Without stopping to inquire whether he really possessed all these endowments, human and angelical, natural and preternatural, or whether the abbot was too blind to perceive them, certain it is that he was refused the habit. His father, who had first abandoned him to want, now reproached him with idleness, and young Brekespere resolved to seek his fortune on a foreign soil. He accordingly visited Paris, where, though poor and destitute, he prosecuted his studies with unremitting assiduity. He then removed to Provence, and became servitor in the monastery of St Rufus, near Avignon. Here his affable manners and obliging disposition, his diligence in study, and, above all, the profound respect which he paid to his superiors, soon commended him to the good will of the monks; and he was not only admitted into the brotherhood, but, upon the death of the abbot William, in 1137, was unanimously chosen to succeed him.

But as the newly elected abbot seemed disposed to exact obedience quite as rigidly as he had paid it, and to enforce the monastic discipline with as much strictness as he had observed it himself, he soon forfeited his former reputation, and excited amongst the monks a hostility, at least as strong as their former regard. They began to discover that that severe propriety of deportment, and that love of order which made him an invaluable servant, rendered him an intolerable master, and they accordingly brought various accusations against him before Pope Eugenius III. To meet them, Nicholas repaired to Rome. The pope, upon examination, not only pronounced him innocent, but, discovering his great talents, took him under his immediate patronage. "This man," said he significantly to the factious fraternity of St Rufus, "shall be no burden to you." After this, he rose with astonishing rapidity. In the year 1146, he was created cardinal,—bishop of Alba. In 1148, he went as legate to Denmark and Norway, where he was eminently successful in the conversion of these barbarous nations

to the christian faith, such as it then was, that is, he induced those savage idolaters to exchange one system of superstition for another. On his return to Rome, he was received by the pope and cardinals with the highest honours. Soon after this, Anastasius, the short-lived successor of Eugenius, died, and Nicholas, in 1154, at once attained the papal crown, taking the name of Adrian.

No sooner did Henry II., king of England, hear of the exaltation of his once obscure subject, than he sent Robert, abbot of St Albans, with three bishops to Rome, to offer his congratulations, and to administer a little sage advice as to the manner in which Adrian should sustain his new character. The letter he wrote is indeed a very singular one, and not altogether consistent with that modesty with which a merely secular prince ought always to address the infallible vicegerent of heaven! It forms a strange contrast with that humble application which the same monarch made to him only a twelvemonth after, when he wanted the pope's blessing on an enterprise of most barefaced injustice and oppression. He advised him—needless suspicion!—not to be biassed by any secular regards in the disposal of ecclesiastical preferments; to take care, since God had raised him to the summit of spiritual greatness, to shine forth with exemplary conduct. The abbot of St Albans had brought with him several valuable presents. It was but a small part of them, however, that Adrian could be induced to accept, jocosely alleging as his reason for refusing the rest,—“I will not accept your gifts, because when I wished to take the habit of your monastery, you would not accept me.” The abbot, who perfectly understood the difference between Nicholas Brekespere, the son of a servitor, and Adrian IV., replied, “It was not for us to oppose the will of Providence, which had destined you for greater things.” In return for this and other compliments, Adrian conferred upon the monastery of St Albans the singular privilege of exemption from all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, except that of Rome. The very next year, as we have already hinted, king Henry sent a still more flattering embassy to the pope. It was to ask his permission to attempt the conquest of Ireland. Thus to gratify momentary ambition, this monarch—and most of the monarchs of Christendom were guilty of the same conduct at one time or another, when they wished to serve a selfish purpose—distinctly acknowledged the papal prerogative of disposing of kingdoms, and of sanctioning or interdicting the enterprises of secular princes. This, in time, led to its own punishment; civil governments deserved to feel the weight of that yoke which they had first fastened on their own necks, and to chafe beneath the pressure of that iron-curb by which they had so often sought to straiten the liberty of others. When we pander to the bad passions of men, it is but just that we should sometimes become their victims. Adrian was not a man to wait for a second application. He appears to have conceived a very comprehensive idea of the extent of the papal prerogative, and to have been disposed to exercise it more vigorously than any of his predecessors. He, of course, immediately sent the English monarch his fatherly benediction, accompanied by an ample bull, masking, as usual, this abominable license of the ambition of others, and his desire to gratify his own, under a pretence of zeal for the welfare of the church, and the extension of Christianity; and invoking, of course, the divine blessing on this iniquitous scheme

of selfish rapacity. The following are sentences in this infamous bull:—  
 “Adrian, bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his most dear son in Christ, the illustrious king of England, sendeth greeting and apostolical benediction. . . . We are confident that, by the blessing of God, the success will answer the wisdom and discretion of the undertaking. You have advertised us, dear son, of your intended expedition into Ireland, to reduce that people to the obedience of that christian faith. . . . We, therefore, being willing to assist you in this pious and laudable design, and consenting to your petition, do grant you full liberty to make a descent upon that island, in order to enlarge the borders of the church, &c. &c., for indeed it is certain, as your highness acknowledges, that all the islands enlightened by Christ . . . are unquestionably St Peter’s right, and belong to the holy Roman church . . .” Henry, in order to insure the concurrence of the pope, appealed to his avarice as well as to his ambition, promising him the due payment of the Peter’s pence for every house throughout the territory which conquest might add to his dominions.

Adrian manifested the same ambitious disposition throughout the whole of his pontificate. When monarchs were not quite so willing to acknowledge his sway as Henry of England, he attempted to coerce them into obedience. No sooner, indeed, had he seated himself in the papal chair, than he launched his lightnings against the Roman people, who, at the instigation of Arnold of Brescia, were endeavouring to regain their ancient liberties, and to restore the authority of the senate. Adrian was not a man likely to abandon the contest. He dismissed the deputies who came to assert the rights of the people in haughty silence, and commanded the senators to banish Arnold. At length, provoked by an assault which the populace made on one of his cardinals, Gerard of St Pudentiana, he put the whole city under an interdict; and to the consternation of the people, all religious functions were suspended. This step was decisive; the infant spirit of liberty quailed before the terrors which superstition inspired; the reformers were banished from the city; and the people acknowledged the sovereignty of the pope.<sup>1</sup> The very same year, Frederic, king of the Romans, tasted of the like discipline. The pope had an interview with that monarch at Sutrium, for the purpose of negotiating a peace. Not content with the punctilious observance of every other customary honour, his holiness insisted that Frederic should hold the stirrup when he alighted. The king at first refused; but the haughty pontiff was inflexible. He refused to dispense with this degrading act of homage, and, after a long conference, Frederic was induced to comply with it.<sup>2</sup> This submission appeased his holiness, and he graciously consented to confer upon his vassal the imperial crown. About the same time, Adrian exercised his prerogative on William, king of the two Sicilies, whom the pope had represented as a vassal of the Roman see, and refusing him the title of king, had insultingly styled him, ‘Lord of Sicily.’ This provoked a war in which the papal troops were defeated. The pope then resorted, with his usual success, to his spiritual weapons.

<sup>1</sup> Fleury.

<sup>2</sup> “This homage,” says Gibbon, “was paid by kings to archbishops, and by vassals to their lords; and it was the nicest policy of Rome to confound the marks of élit and feudal subjection.”



Excommunication brought the refractory monarch to his senses; and the king consented not only to receive his crown at the hands of the pope, but to pay him an annual tribute. Circumstances connected with this quarrel renewed the pope's differences with the emperor Frederic. After giving each other mutual provocations, Adrian had the imprudence and insolence to boast that he had conferred on Frederic his crown. The emperor, as well as all the princes and bishops of the empire, deeply resented this language. The papal legates were sent back in dishonour to Rome, and the bishops protested in terms so strong as convinced the pope that he had asserted claims which he was quite unable to sustain. He, therefore, retracted the offensive expressions, in a letter full of miserable subterfuges and evasions. The quarrel, however, soon broke out again, and remained undecided at Adrian's death. This event took place in the year 1159, at Anagni. Adrian left behind him some letters and homilies.<sup>3</sup>

Little is known of the private life of this pontiff; it is not, however, likely that one whose public conduct was marked by such pride, haughtiness, and ambition, should have been in private distinguished for the softer virtues. He was evidently possessed of that decision of character, that inflexibility of purpose, that confidence in his own powers, that superiority to trifling and frivolous pursuits, and that severity of manners, which generally distinguish men of lofty ambition. As usual, he felt that power and dignity are not necessarily connected with happiness; and he had the honesty to avow it. To John of Salisbury, his old friend, who boldly reproved his pride and tyranny, he acknowledged that his "crown seemed to have been put burning on his head." He forgot, however, to add, that all this was the necessary consequence, as it was the just punishment, of his insolent pride and his restless ambition.

## Thomas a Becket.

BORN A. D. 1119.—DIED A. D. 1170.

THOMAS BECKET, so famous in ecclesiastical history for his martyrdom and miracles, was born in London in the year 1119. His father Gilbert was a merchant, and some time sheriff of that city. A romantic story is narrated by Brompton of his mother Maud, or Matilda, whom he represents as a Saracen lady of considerable quality. Gilbert, according to this author, had, in his youth, visited Jerusalem, where he was taken prisoner by the infidels, and treated with great severity. He had the good fortune, however, to attract the favour of his master, and subsequently to make an impression on the heart of his daughter, who, captivated with his conversation and his religion, told him frankly she intended to turn Christian and abandon her native country for his sake. This declaration surprised the English merchant; but his doubts about her sincerity led him to treat the proposal with indifference. Finding an opportunity of breaking his chains he made his escape,

<sup>3</sup> Concil. tom. x.—Leland de Script. Brit. Adr.

and returned to England, where, in a short time, he was discovered by the enamoured lady who had contrived to elude the vigilance of her father, and was conducted to London in the vessel of an English merchantman. Such proof of zeal and affection was irresistible, and, on embracing the Christian faith, she became the wife of Gilbert, and the happy mother of Becket. This narrative has little appearance of probability, though it may have passed for truth in an ignorant and barbarous age.

The young Becket received the rudiments of his education at Merton abbey in Surrey; and afterwards studied at Oxford and Paris. By some means he had gained the favour of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, who sent him to study the civil law at Bologna in Italy. He had given proofs both of industry and capacity, and, on his return, he appeared to have made such proficiency in knowledge that, besides some other offices and preferments, he was advanced by his patron to the archdeaconry of Canterbury, then one of the richest benefices in England.<sup>1</sup> Theobald afterwards employed him with success in transacting business at Rome; and on Henry's accession he was recommended to that prince as worthy of farther preferment. The king, who was naturally of a haughty disposition, was at that time surrounded with advisers, who urged him to make what the clergy considered encroachments on the rights and authority of the church. To these evil counsels Archbishop Theobald was anxious to oppose the virtues and abilities of Becket; and, as his rank gave him free access to the court, he took every opportunity of possessing the royal mind with a high esteem for the archdeacon of Canterbury. Henry, who knew that Becket had been instrumental in supporting that resolution of the archbishop which had tended so much to facilitate his own advancement to the throne, was already predisposed in his favour; and finding, on better acquaintance, that his spirit and talents entitled him to any trust, he soon promoted him (in 1158) to the dignity of high chancellor, an office whose jurisdiction extended to every business of importance in church or state. Besides exercising these high functions, Becket was made provost of Beverley, dean of Hastings, and constable of the Tower. He was also put in possession of the honours of Eye and Berkham, large baronies that had escheated to the crown; and, to complete his grandeur, he was intrusted with the education of prince Henry, the king's eldest son.

On obtaining these high and envied appointments he laid aside the ecclesiastical habit and way of living, and affected both the dress and manners of a courtier. In every thing he conformed himself entirely to the king's humours,—hunted with him, partook of all his diversions, and even observed the same hours of eating and sleeping. Henry, on the other hand, honoured him with his friendship and intimacy;<sup>2</sup> and whenever he was disposed to relax himself by gaming, hawking, horsemanship, or sports of any kind, he admitted his chancellor to the party. An instance of their familiarity is mentioned by Fitz-Stephens, which is not unworthy of notice as showing the manners of the age. One day as the king and Becket were riding together through the streets of London, they observed a half-naked

<sup>1</sup> Stephanides, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Stephan. 14—17.—Epist. S. Thom. i. 126.

beggar shivering with cold. "Would it not be very praiseworthy," said the king, "to give that poor man a warm coat in this severe season?" "It would surely," replied the chancellor, "and you do well, Sir, in thinking of such good actions." "Then he shall have one presently," cried the king; and seizing the skirt of Becket's coat, which was of scarlet lined with ermine, he began to pull it violently. The chancellor defended himself for some time; and they had both of them nearly tumbled off their horses on the street, when Becket, after a vehement struggle, let go his coat, which the king bestowed on the beggar; the poor man, ignorant of the quality of his benefactors, being not a little surprised at the present. In his style of living, Becket displayed a princely magnificence. He had numerous and splendid levees, and courted applause by every popular art. The pomp of his retinue, the sumptuousness of his furniture, the luxury of his table, the munificence of his presents, corresponded to his elevated rank, or rather exceeded any thing that England had before seen in any subject. When he rode on horseback he used a silver bridle, and in the gaiety and opulence of his entertainments he surpassed the greatest nobles. His historian and secretary, Fitz-Stephens, mentions, among other particulars, that his apartments were, every day in winter, covered with clean straw or hay, and in summer with green rushes, or boughs, lest the gentlemen who paid court to him, and who could not, by reason of the vast concourse, find a place at table, should soil their fine clothes by sitting on a dirty floor. A numerous body of knights were retained in his service; the greatest barons were proud of being his guests; his house was a place of education for the sons of the chief nobility, and the king himself frequently deigned to partake of his hospitality. In the cavalier spirit of the age he made a campaign with Henry in his expedition against Thoulouse, (A. D. 1159,) and exposed his person in several military actions. At his own charge he carried over seven hundred knights to attend the king. In the subsequent wars on the frontiers of Normandy, he maintained, during forty days, twelve hundred knights and four thousand of their train, displaying both tact and courage, and commanding in person at the sieges of several places of strength. In 1160, he was sent by the king to Paris to treat of a marriage between prince Henry, then but seven years old, and the princess Margaret, daughter to the king of France, who was only in her third year. In this negotiation Becket succeeded, and returned with the young princess to England. By his complaisance and good humour, he had rendered himself agreeable, and by his industry and abilities useful to his master, and on the death of Theobald, (A. D. 1162,) he appeared to Henry the fittest person to fill the vacant see. The chancellor was then with the king in Normandy, and on being informed of his majesty's design he smiled, and pointing to the secular habit he wore, said, "Truly, Sire, you have pitched upon a very reformed and holy person to govern the first church in England!" The king's intention was opposed by the queen and many of the ministers, and even Becket himself is said to have remonstrated against the appointment, and predicted the unhappy consequences that would ensue from it in creating a breach of their friendship. But Henry, who had made no secret of his wishes to retrench, or rather confine within their ancient bounds all ecclesiastical privileges, and had found the chancel-



lor always ready to comply with his designs, never expected to meet with resistance from that quarter, and accordingly issued orders for electing him archbishop of Canterbury; and so well did his agents manage the matter with the monks and the clergy, that no opposition was made except by the bishop of London. His consecration by the bishop of Winchester took place in the cathedral church of Canterbury; the young prince Henry, and a great concourse of the nobility, being present at the solemnity.

The new archbishop received his pall from Pope Alexander III., then residing in France; and immediately after his consecration sent messengers to the king in Normandy, resigning the seal and office of chancellor,<sup>3</sup> a step which surprised the king, as he seems to have intended him still to hold that dignity. Installed in his high functions, which rendered him the second person in the kingdom, Becket immediately betook himself to quite a different mode of life, and endeavoured by his altered demeanour to acquire the character of sanctity, which might naturally be supposed to be somewhat incompatible with his former habits. The gaiety and amusements of the courtier were exchanged for the gravity and austerities of the monk. He maintained in his retinue and attendants alone his former pomp and lustre, which was useful to impose on the vulgar. In his own person he affected the most rigid abstinence and mortification, which he was sensible would have an equal perhaps greater effect in attracting the reverence of a superstitious people. He wore sackcloth next his skin, which by a pretended care to conceal it, was necessarily the more remarked by every body. He changed it so seldom that it was filled with dirt and vermin. His usual diet was bread; his drink water, which he even rendered more unpalatable by a mixture of unsavoury herbs. He lacerated his back with the frequent discipline which he inflicted on it. He daily on his knees washed, in imitation of Christ, the feet of thirteen beggars whom he afterwards dismissed with presents. The affection of the monks he gained by his frequent charities to the convents and hospitals. Every one who made profession of sanctity was admitted to his conversation, and returned full of panegyrics on the humility as well as on the piety and mortification of the holy primate. He seemed to be perpetually employed in reciting prayers and pious lectures, or in perusing religious discourses. His countenance wore the appearance of seriousness, mental reflection, and inward devotion; and all men of penetration clearly saw that he was meditating some great design, and that the ambition and ostentation of his character had turned itself towards a new and more dangerous object. His resigning his commission of chancellor without even consulting the king, which he pretended was necessary, in order to detach himself from all secular affairs, and leave him to the sole exercise of his spiritual duties, was in reality intended to break off his connections with Henry, and show him that the primate of England was no longer to continue an obsequious courtier. His first public appearance as a churchman was at the council of Tours, which was held to consider the schism then existing in regard to the papacy, which was claimed by two competitors. Cardinal Roland had been elected under the name of Alexander

<sup>3</sup> Bles. Ep. 27.—Gervase, 1334.

III.; but Cardinal Octavian had the support of a powerful faction who were determined to maintain him in his usurpation. For several days he besieged Alexander in St Peter's church, and at length obliged him to take refuge in France. The synod of Tours put an end to the controversy. In this assembly, Becket figured among the most eminent prelates. At his entrance into the city, he was received by the magistrates and most of the members of the council. The pope showed him particular marks of affection and esteem; and through his interest he procured several canons and decrees to be made in favour of ecclesiastics, whom he represented as oppressed and deprived of their right through the ambition and avarice of the laity. Immediately on his return to England, he began to exert himself with great vigour in defence of the privileges of the church; nor did he wait till any encroachments had been offered on the part of the crown. Besides prosecuting at law several of the nobility and others for lands and tenements which he pretended they had usurped from the see of Canterbury, he laid claim to the custody of the castle and tower of Rochester, then in the king's hands. He summoned the earl of Clare to surrender the barony of Tunbridge, which had remained in the family of that nobleman since the Conquest; and he excommunicated William, lord of the manor of Aynsford in Kent, for disputing with him the right of patronage to that church. In this emergency, William applied to the king, who wrote to Becket, expressing his displeasure that he had not acquainted him before passing the censure, and desiring that it might be removed. The archbishop replied by letter—for they had broken off all personal intercourse—that it belonged to the church, and not to the king, to direct him whom he should absolve, and whom excommunicate; and it was not till after many threats and entreaties that Becket was induced to comply with the royal mandate. Henry now became aware how little he had understood the character and genius of his minister; but though he found himself grievously mistaken, he was resolved not to desist from his former intention of restraining clerical usurpation. The violence and obstinacy of Becket had greatly alienated the minds both of the king and the nobility; and it wanted but a plausible occasion to bring them to an open rupture. There was at that time no distinct line of separation between the civil and ecclesiastical power; and their mutual encroachment on each other was the cause of perpetual dissension, and frequently of gross violations of order. The clergy had renounced all immediate subordination to the magistrate; they openly declined in criminal accusations, to appear on trial before the courts of justice, and were gradually introducing a similar exemption in civil causes. Spiritual penalties, they contended, were the proper punishment for their offences, which the church alone had the authority to inflict. Holy orders thus became a full protection for all sorts of vices and enormities, for as ecclesiastics had extremely multiplied in England, and many of them were consequently of very low character, crimes of the deepest dye, murders, robberies, adulteries, and rapes, were daily committed by them with impunity. Since the king's accession, it was found that not less than a hundred murders had been perpetrated by men of that profession, who had never been called to account for their offences. Among other instances of these atrocities, a clerk in Worcestershire had debauched a

gentleman's daughter, and afterwards murdered the father. The king demanded that the criminal should be delivered up, and tried in the civil court. Becket refused to comply; ordered the malefactor to be confined in the prison of the bishop of the diocese, instead of being committed to the hands of the king's officers, and insisted that the censure of the church superseded the jurisdiction of the magistrate, since it would be iniquitous to try a man twice upon the same accusation, and for the same offence. These privileges, which the clergy had carried to such an extravagant height, Henry determined to curtail; but he met with a decided opposition by the archbishop, who stood firmly in defence of their immunities, and would not submit to the least infringement of them. The king was equally decided, and having summoned an assembly of all the prelates of England to meet at Westminster, he put to them the concise and direct question:—Whether or not they were willing to submit to the ancient laws and customs of the kingdom? The bishops unanimously replied, that they were willing, “saving their own order,” an answer which provoked the king to the highest indignation. He instantly quitted the assembly; nor could his threats or displeasure extort any thing beyond a general and indefinite promise of obedience to the ancient customs.<sup>4</sup> Not content with a declaration so vague, and in order to define expressly those customs with which he required compliance, Henry summoned a general council, or convention of the nobility and prelates at Clarendon, to whom he submitted the same important question. The barons all adhered to the king's party, and most of the bishops were gained over by the court, or overawed by the general combination against them. At this convention, several laws were enacted relative to the privileges of the clergy, commonly called ‘the constitutions of Clarendon,’ by which the boundary between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities was more clearly defined. By passing so many ecclesiastical ordinances in a national assembly composed of clergy and laity, Henry fully established the superiority of the legislative, above all papal decrees, or spiritual canons, and gained a signal victory over the usurpations of the church. But as he knew the bishops would take the earliest opportunity of disputing the legality of these constitutions, he resolved that they should all set their seal to them, and give a promise to observe them. To this none of the prelates dared to object, except Becket, who, though urged by all the principal barons and nobles in the kingdom, obstinately withheld his assent. The tears and entreaties of his friends, and the desertion of his own brethren, at length obliged him to comply; and he promised with an oath, “legally, with good faith, and without fraud or reserve,” to obey the constitution. Henry thinking that every thing was now firmly adjusted, sent to France to request the ratification of Pope Alexander; but that pontiff, though he was under the most important obligations to the king, plainly saw that these laws were calculated to establish the independency of England on the papacy, and of the royal power on the clergy, and condemned them in the strongest terms; and with the exception of six articles out of sixteen, which he agreed to ratify for the sake of peace, he abrogated, annulled, and rejected them.

<sup>4</sup> Stephan. 29.—Gervase 1385.



Becket had formerly expressed his sorrow for having engaged at the synod of Westminster to conform to the ancient customs of the kingdom, and was with great difficulty prevailed upon not to withdraw his submission. He had again, by his seal and oath, solemnly promised to observe the constitutions of Clarendon; but when he found from the pope's withholding his assent, that he might hope for support in opposition, he began to repent of his compliance, and endeavoured to engage all the other prelates in a confederacy to maintain their common rights and privileges, in which he represented the interest and honour of God to be so deeply concerned. He retired from court; redoubled his austerities in proportion to the enormity of his supposed offence, and even suspended himself from exercising any part of his sacred functions until he should receive absolution from the pope, which was easily granted. Alexander, willing to heal this breach between the king and the archbishop, sent Rotro, a Norman prelate, over to England for that purpose; but Henry would consent to no accommodation unless the constitutions of Clarendon were confirmed by a bull from his holiness. Resolved to take vengeance on Becket for his refractory behaviour, and, if possible, to crush him by means of that very power which he was so obstinate in supporting, he applied to the pope to make Roger, archbishop of York, his legate for England. But the crafty pontiff, aware that this was intended to restrain the jurisdiction of the archbishop of Canterbury, would grant the commission only on condition that the legate should not be empowered to execute any act prejudicial to the authority of that prelate. Henry was more and more exasperated at this disappointment, and seeing how inefficient the legantine power would be clogged with such a proviso, sent back the commission by the same messenger that brought it. Despairing of the king's favour, perhaps dreading his resentment, Becket twice endeavoured to make his escape beyond seas; but before he could reach the coast of France, the wind turning brought him back to England. On repairing to Canterbury, he found the king's officers plundering his palace, but they desisted on his appearance. To prevent any further attempts to escape, Henry summoned a parliament at Northampton, which met in October, 1165, and which he purposed to make the instrument of his vengeance against the inflexible prelate. The king's marischal had been instigated to sue Becket in the ecclesiastical court, for some lands as held of the see of Canterbury; and on pretence that justice was not done him, he was instructed to appeal from the archbishop's to the king's court. On the day appointed for trying the cause, the primate who alleged sickness for not appearing personally, sent four knights to represent some irregularities in the appeal, and attest certain defects in the proof. But his defence was not sustained; the four knights were accused of offering false evidence to the court, and with difficulty escaped being sent to prison. Becket at last found it necessary to obey the king's summons; he appeared at Northampton, expressed his readiness to justify his cause against the marischal, and to submit his conduct to the great council of the nation. He insisted that the proceedings of the church court were perfectly regular; that the iniquity of the marischal's claim would be proved from the sheriff's testimony; that he had himself discovered no contempt for the king's court; and even should it

be found that he had been guilty of non-appearance, the laws had affixed a very slight penalty to that offence. But it was in vain that Becket urged these excuses. The barons were ready to vote whatever sentence the king might please to dictate, and even the bishops, whatever secret attachment they might bear to the champion of their liberties, concurred with the rest in the design of humbling their primate. Accordingly the archbishop was condemned as guilty of contempt of court, and as wanting in the fealty which he had sworn to his sovereign. His goods and chattels were confiscated; and that this triumph over the church might be carried to the utmost, the sentence was ordered to be pronounced by one of its own members. This was a delicate office, and occasioned some dispute between the barons and the bishops; the former urging that they were laymen; that the spiritual lords were of the archbishop's order, and consequently it was their business to deliver judgment; the latter maintained that the sentence not being ecclesiastical but secular, belonged rather to the temporal lords. The king having put an end to the controversy by commanding the bishop of Winchester to perform the ungracious duty, which he did with great reluctance, Becket submitted to the decree, and all the prelates, except the bishop of London, who wished to commend himself to the king, became sureties for him. This victory was not enough; and Henry, whose violence had more of passion than of justice, or even policy in it, was determined to pursue his advantage. Next day he demanded of Becket the sum of three hundred pounds, which he had levied from the manors of Eye and Berkham, while in his possession. The archbishop agreed to pay the money rather than allow it to be any ground of quarrel; though he stated that more than the sum in question had been expended in repairs. In the subsequent meeting the king demanded five hundred marks which he affirmed he had lent Becket during the war at Thoulouse; and another sum to the same amount for which he alleged he had become his surety to a Jew. In addition to these two claims, he preferred a third of still greater importance. He required him to render all the accounts of his administration while chancellor, and to pay the balance due from the revenues of all the prelaties, abbacies and baronies which had, during that time, been subjected to his management. As this demand was totally unexpected, and required some delay, Becket requested leave to consult his suffragans in an affair of such intricacy. To pay or find security for a sum which, by the king's estimate, amounted to 44,000 marks, was impracticable; and the bishops were extremely at a loss what counsel to give him. By the advice of the bishop of Winchester, he offered 2,000 marks as a general satisfaction for all demands, but the offer was rejected. Some prelates exhorted him to resign his see, on condition of receiving an acquittal, while others were of opinion that he ought to submit himself entirely to the king's mercy. The bishop of Exeter thought that since the seas ran high they ought to furl their sails; and as the persecution was not general, but levelled at a single person, it were better to throw their pilot over board than suffer the whole church of England to perish in the storm. Roger of Worcester would not venture to give an advice in this case; for, if he should assert that a prelate ought to succumb to a king, he would speak against his conscience; and, if he said the reverse, he might incur the risk of suspen-

sion, or banishment. The bishop of Ely had a stroke of palsy, and could not attend, which led William of Norwich to wish he had been screened by the same misfortune, as God, he thought, had sent his brother of Ely a very happy excuse. Under these difficulties Becket's first determination was to brave all his enemies; to trust for protection to the sacredness of his character, and identify his cause with that of religion. In performing mass, he took care that the whole service should pointedly bear upon the recent occurrences. He directed the introit to the communion to begin with these words, "Princes sat and spoke against me;" hoping that, in the passage appointed for the martyrdom of St Stephen, some resemblance might be traced to his own sufferings for righteousness' sake. From church he went to court, arrayed in his pontifical robes. As soon as he arrived within the palace-gate, he took the cross into his own hands, bore it aloft as his protection, and marched in that attitude into the royal apartments. The king was astonished at this parade, imagining he and his court were to be excommunicated, and sent some of the prelates to remonstrate with him on his audacious behaviour. On being reminded of his having subscribed the constitutions of Clarendon, and of his present conduct being in violation of those laws, he replied, that though he had sworn to observe them "legally, with good faith, and without fraud or reservation," these words virtually implied a proviso for the rights of his order, which could never be relinquished by oaths or engagements. If he and they had erred in resigning their ecclesiastical privileges, the best atonement they could make, he said, was to retract their consent, which, in such a case, could never be obligatory. But the bishops felt no disposition to recant, and told him, that though they had hitherto acknowledged and obeyed him as their primate, they could no longer consider him under that character, since he had so grossly failed in his duty to the king, and broken the laws he had sworn to observe. Henry had now succeeded beyond his wishes, and would probably have pushed matters to the utmost extremity against Becket, but that prelate gave him no leisure to conduct the prosecution. The earl of Leicester, in name of the barons, had charged him with high-treason in breaking the constitutions of Clarendon, and was preparing to pronounce sentence, when Becket rose and told them they were laymen, and had no authority to sit in judgment upon their archbishop; upon which he walked out of court without waiting to hear the sentence. His departure called forth reproaches of perjury and treason from some of the members; to these he replied, turning back with a stern look, that but for the restraints of his character, and his regard for religion, he would have disproved their calumnies and defended his honour with the sword.<sup>5</sup> In this forlorn situation, deserted by his brethren, and finding all hopes of accommodation at an end, he privately withdrew from Northampton, and travelled on foot and in disguise to Lincoln, attended by only two servants. From that city he reached a small solitary island, where he remained three days; and thence, after travelling a week, he arrived at a small town, dependant on the church of Canterbury, where his extreme weariness obliged him to stop for some time, lying concealed in a chamber belonging to an

<sup>5</sup> Gervase, 1339.—Diceto, 537.



ecclesiastic to whom he discovered himself. After a great deal of fatigue, he reached the coast, and getting on board a vessel, he arrived at Gravelines in Holland. His perils and misfortunes did not end with his escape. Upon his arrival in Flanders, not being willing to make himself known, he journeyed on foot through bad roads, and in a very rainy season, until his strength being quite spent, he fell to the ground and could walk no farther. His few attendants, with some difficulty, procured him a very bad horse, without bridle or saddle, upon which they threw their cloaks. In this plight he was met by some soldiers, who, having heard of his flight, asked him if he was not the archbishop of Canterbury? With great presence of mind he replied, "This is not the equipage of an archbishop;" upon which he was allowed to pass. At Gravelines the innkeeper where he lodged having also heard of his escape, and considering the manners and behaviour of his guest, imagined this must be the person, and immediately throwing himself at his feet, entreated his blessing. Becket being satisfied of the man's sincerity, disclosed himself without reserve, and was entertained by him with great respect and hospitality. Continuing his journey to St Omer, he there found an asylum in the monastery of St Britin, the abbot and the monks receiving him with the greatest affection.

The violence of persecution generally defeats its own purpose, and often turns the tide of public sympathy in favour of the oppressed. The English began to overlook the perfidy and ingratitude of Becket, and abroad he was honoured as a martyr. There were, besides, political reasons for the countenance and protection he met with on the continent. Philip, earl of Flanders, and Louis, king of France, jealous of the rising greatness of Henry, were well pleased to stir up disturbance in his government. They affected to pity the condition of the exiled primate. Louis invited him to fix his residence at Soissons, where he even honoured him with a visit, and offered him a maintenance suitable to his dignity. This latter proposal the archbishop declined, and, soon afterwards, repaired to Sens, where he had an interview with the pope, into whose hands, at a private audience, he resigned the see of Canterbury, alleging that his election was not canonical, but was immediately restored by his holiness, who promised to take care of him and his interests, and, by a bull, pretended to abrogate the sentence which the great council of England had passed against him. Meantime Henry, in revenge, proceeded to acts of extreme rigour against the obnoxious prelate. He immediately confiscated the revenues of his archbishopric; he sent embassies to the king of France and the earl of Flanders, to prevail with these princes not to afford Becket shelter in their dominions. But the attempt entirely failed. Louis was shocked when he heard the primate styled the late archbishop, and asked who had deposed him? "I am a king," said he, "no less than your master, and yet I have no authority to deprive the meanest clerk in my dominions." Moreover, he despatched his almoner to Sens, conjuring the pope, if he had any regard for the honour of the Catholic church, or the friendship and assistance of France, that he would do his utmost to protect Thomas of Canterbury against the tyrant of England. Not succeeding at the French court, Henry sent a magnificent embassy to the pope to explain the charges against the archbishop, and request his holiness to send legates over to England to effect, if

possible, an accommodation. Alexander gave this splendid retinue of bishops and nobles a cold reception, and allowed them to depart without any satisfactory answer. Henry was exceedingly indignant to find his policy completely abortive. By a conduct at once arbitrary and cruel, he banished all the archbishop's relations and domestics to the number of four hundred, sparing neither age nor sex, for women and infants, the sick and the infirm, were involved in the proscription, and driven beyond sea.<sup>6</sup> To aggravate their punishment, these unfortunate exiles were compelled to take oath that they would immediately join their patron in Normandy, where he then resided in the abbey of Pontigny. An order at the same time was published in England, forbidding all persons to correspond with Becket, or send him money, or so much as pray for him in the churches. This rigour, intended to reduce the refractory primate sooner to necessity, lost its effect; the pope absolved the refugees from their oath, and got them comfortably distributed among the convents in France and Flanders. Becket himself was enabled to live in great splendour, in the convent of Pontigny, partly from a pension granted him on the revenues of that abbey, and partly from considerable remittances made him by the French king. He even ventured to expostulate with Henry in a letter which he wrote, reminding him that kings had no authority but what they received from the church; urging him as he valued the interests of his own soul, not to infringe the rights he had sworn at his coronation to defend; and threatening him with divine vengeance unless he made instant restitution of the castles, townships and manors which had been violently taken from his clerks and tenants. In another epistle to the bishops of England, he complained of their not taking part with him against the wicked, as seeking to please men rather than serve the church of God. He acquainted them that the pope had annulled the constitutions of Clarendon, and released them from their obligation to observe those unrighteous laws. In order to heighten the odium against his persecutors, he took care to proclaim everywhere the wrongs which he had suffered; he compared himself to Christ, who had been condemned by a lay tribunal; and that he was crucified afresh in the oppressions under which his church still laboured; he took it for granted, as a point incontestable, that his cause was the cause of God; he claimed the exercise of discipline and correction, as being the spiritual father both of the king and the people of England, and inveighed against the absurdity of inverting this relationship by allowing the son to chastise his own parent. In virtue of this assumed prerogative, he issued out anathemas against various persons who had opposed or violated the rights of the church; some were excommunicated for accepting preferments, or drawing the revenues of their livings without his authority, and others for having been concerned in writing the 'unreasonable constitutions.' The king's chief ministers were excommunicated by name; and the spiritual thunder was suspended over the head of Henry himself. "As to the person of our sovereign lord the king," says he, "we have hitherto forborne to exert any censure, hoping that time and the grace of God might bring him to recollection and repentance; though, unless he quickly retrieve his wrong steps, we shall be forced to make use of our authority against him too."

<sup>6</sup> Ep. S. Thom. i. 14, 15, 16, 23.—Hoved. 284.

Perhaps Becket was instigated to assume this tone of defiance by the turn which matters had taken at Rome in favour of Alexander, who, after a long exile, had returned to his capital. The breach between Henry and the apostolic see was as wide as ever, and he took care to make provisions against the impending rupture. He issued orders to his justiciaries, forbidding, under severe penalties, all appeals to the pope or archbishop, prohibiting any one to receive mandates from them, or apply, in any case, to their authority. He suspended the payment of 'Peter's pence,' and made advances towards an alliance with the emperor Barbarossa, who had espoused the cause of the arch pope, Pascal III., hoping by these expedients to terrify the pontiff from proceeding to extremities against him. He wrote also to the general chapter of the Cisterrians, expressing his displeasure at their entertaining Becket, and threatening to seize all their estates in his dominions unless they drove him from the abbey of Pontigny. Upon this threat the primate withdrew to Sens, and thence, at the king of France's recommendation, to the convent of St Columba, where he remained four years. Both the contending parties, by their violent proceedings, had injured rather than benefited their cause. The letters and excommunications of Becket, so far from serving his interest, had exasperated the minds of many against him; while Henry had reduced himself to the unhappy situation of having thrown away the only spiritual weapon that could finally decide this controversy. His ministers and clergy were underlying the ban of the church, and there was no other expedient he could employ for releasing them from this terrible censure but by appealing to the pope; an authority which he had himself prohibited them to acknowledge, or apply to in any case whatever, under pain of treason. The bishops of the province of Canterbury wrote to their primate, entreating him to abate somewhat of his obstinacy, and endeavoured to open a way for a reconciliation. They expressed their displeasure at his having threatened the king with the censures of the church, a measure more likely to inflame than heal the quarrel between them; they implored him rather to try the effects of patience and humility, and throw himself on his majesty's clemency, who had been a bountiful patron to him in raising him from such slender beginnings to the highest dignity in the realm. They ventured to suggest, that unless concessions were made, it might endanger the pope's jurisdiction, and withdraw the kingdom of England from his communion; and to prevent these unfortunate consequences they were willing once more to appeal to the court of Rome.<sup>7</sup> Becket in reply stated his surprise at the unfriendly and satirical style of their epistle, reproved them for charging him with ingratitude, and upbraiding him with the meanness of his birth and original station; but as for yielding, or submitting, it was the first time he had heard that inferiors had any authority over their superiors, or suffragans to be judges of their metropolitans; lastly, he had resolved with the apostle, that 'neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor any other creature,' should separate him from his duty, and he desires the bishops to pray for him that his constancy might not sink under such accumulated afflictions. But he did more than remonstrate, he had obtained from the pope a legantine commission over

<sup>7</sup> Ep. i. 126.



England, in virtue of which, he summoned the bishops of Salisbury and others to attend him under pain of excommunication, and ordered that the ecclesiastics sequestered on his account should be restored in two months to all their benefices.<sup>8</sup> But the king's agent with the pope, John of Oxford, had the address to procure orders for the suspending of this sentence; and he gave his holiness such hopes of a speedy reconciliation between the parties, that two legates were despatched to Normandy, where Henry then was, to bring the dispute to a final adjustment. Matters however were not ripe for an accommodation. Henry required that all the constitutions of Clarendon should be ratified; while Becket insisted that, previous to any agreement, he and his adherents should be restored to their possessions. As the legates had no power to pronounce a definitive sentence on either side, the present negotiation came to nothing.

In 1167, and the two following years, the negotiations were renewed, but all attempts at reconciliation proved ineffectual. At an interview between Louis and Henry, at Montmirail in Champagne, Becket was urged to make his submission. A rumour had been spread that the English monarch intended to undertake a crusade, provided the affairs of the church were settled to his satisfaction. The prospect of this expedition made the pope press an accommodation, and the archbishop seemed not unwilling to comply. He would, however, agree to no arrangement, without a stipulation that nothing should be done inconsistent with the honour of God. Henry was enraged at this clause of reservation, and observed to the king of France, that it virtually rendered void the whole proceedings, since whatever Becket did not relish he would be sure to pronounce contrary to the honour of God. "However," added Henry, "to show my inclination to compromise matters, I will make him this proposition. There have been many kings of England, some greater, and some inferior to myself; there have been also many great and holy men in the see of Canterbury. Let Becket, therefore, but pay me the same regard, and own my authority so far as the greatest of his predecessors owned that of the least of mine, and I am satisfied. And as I never forced him out of England, I give him leave to return at his pleasure; and am willing he should enjoy his archbishopric, with as ample privileges as any of his predecessors." Upon this the whole audience declared aloud that the king had gone far enough in his condescensions. Louis was so struck with this state of the case, that he could not forbear condemning the primate, and withdrawing his friendship from him, and even withholding his pension. But neither force nor argument could prevail with Becket, and the conference terminated without effect. The bigotry of Louis and his inveterate animosity against England, soon restored the archbishop to the French king's favour. Becket knew well how to excite the public sympathy, and when he found himself deprived of the means of supporting himself and his family, he resolved to dismiss his retinue and go a-begging. Before, however, he had carried this whim into practice, Louis unexpectedly requested his attendance. A fit of penitence had seized him, and throwing himself in tears at the archbishop's feet, "My Lord," he exclaimed, "you are the only discerning person; nobody's eyes

<sup>8</sup> Ep. i. 96. — Gervase, 1400.

have been open on this occasion but yours. As for us who advised you to wave the mention of 'God's honour,' to honour a mortal man, we were all no better than stock blind. Father, I am sorry for what I have done; I entreat your pardon, and as for my person and kingdom they are both at your service." Whether this contrition was real or political may be uncertain; Becket however recovered his pension, and the favour of the French court.

A third negotiation was attempted in 1169, but with no better success than the two former. On this occasion the king had relaxed so far as to consent without any clause of reservation, that the archbishop should enjoy his see, with the privileges of his predecessors, and offered a thousand marks to defray the expense of his voyage back to England. Becket insisted that he had received damage to the value of thirty thousand marks, and that without restitution, the guilt of injustice would still remain. But at the instance of Louis and the nobility of both kingdoms, he dropped his claim to the money, and accepted the king's offer. The terms of accommodation seemed now adjusted, and Becket desired no more than that the king would do him the honour of the customary salute, as a mark of his favour and friendship. This was fatal to the whole arrangement. Henry observed he should willingly have gratified Becket in this request, had he not once sworn in a passion never to salute the archbishop on the cheek; but he averred that the omission of this ceremony should imply no ill-will on his part. The primate, suspecting some unfriendly reserve, refused to accept the articles without the kiss of peace, nor would the king yield the point although the pope to obviate the difficulty, offered to grant him a dispensation from his vow. This treaty having fallen to the ground, Henry, fearing lest Becket should procure an interdict to be laid on his dominions, ordered all his English subjects above fifteen years of age to take an oath by which they renounced the authority both of the archbishop and the pope. Most of the laity complied with this test of their loyalty; but few of the clergy could be induced to subscribe it. About the same time the king having caused his son the young prince, to be crowned at Westminster, where the ceremony was performed by Roger, archbishop of York, without any protestation to save the privileges of the see of Canterbury to which that office of right belonged. Becket complained of this injury to the pope, who empowered him to suspend the archbishop of York, and to excommunicate the bishops that assisted him. In this extreme, matters could not long continue. The pope sent two commissions to England to attempt a compromise; while Henry, equally anxious to put a period to the contest, set out for Normandy, where he was waited upon by Becket at the confines of Maine. Here an accommodation was at last brought about, A. D. 1170, and all differences amicably adjusted. Becket was allowed to return to England in terms that may be considered both honourable and advantageous. He was not required to give up any rights of the church, or resign any of those pretensions which had been the original grounds of the controversy. It was agreed that he and his adherents should, without making farther submission, be restored to all their livings; and that even the possessors of such benefices as depended on the see of Canterbury, and had been filled during the primate's absence, should be expelled, and Becket have liberty to supply the vacancies.

In return for concessions which trenched so deeply on the honour and dignity of the crown, Henry reaped only the advantage of seeing his ministers absolved from the sentence of excommunication pronounced against them, and of preventing the interdict which, if these hard conditions had not been complied with, was ready to be laid on his kingdom. It was obviously the dread of this event that induced him to submit to terms so dishonourable, and so anxious was he to conciliate Becket, that he took the most extraordinary steps to flatter his vanity; and even on one occasion humiliated himself so far as to hold the stirrup of the haughty prelate's horse while he twice mounted and dismounted.

Becket now took leave of France on his return to England. On his approaching the coast, the archbishop of York and the rest of the suspended prelates ignorant of the compromise, and afraid lest he should publish the pope's sentence against them, endeavoured to oppose his landing by stationing military guards at the different ports.<sup>9</sup> But on being informed that a reconciliation had taken place, they laid down their arms. Becket, elated with his victory, proceeded in the most ostentatious manner to take possession of his diocese. In Rochester and all the towns through which he passed, he was received with the shouts and acclamations of the populace. As he approached Southwark, the clergy, the laity, men of all ranks and ages, came forth to meet him, and celebrated with hymns of joy his triumphant entrance. And though he was commanded by the young prince, whose order to absolve the suspended and excommunicated bishops he had refused to obey, to return immediately to his diocese, he found that he was not mistaken when he reckoned upon the highest veneration of the public towards his person and his dignity. But instead of a temperate and lenient exercise of his authority, he proceeded with the more courage to dart his spiritual thunders, and issued the censures of the church against all who had assisted at the coronation of the young prince, or been active in the late persecution of the exiled clergy. These violent measures exasperated Henry more and more, but he hoped by forbearance and delay on his part to soften the rigour of Becket's opposition, especially since his pride was fully gratified by his restoration. Becket, however, was resolved to push to the utmost the advantages which his present victory gave, and to disconcert the cautious measures of the king by the vehemence and rigour of his own conduct. Assured of support from Rome, he was little intimidated by dangers which his courage taught him to despise, and which, even if attended with the most fatal consequences, would serve only to justify his ambition and thirst of glory. His refusal to absolve the archbishop of York, induced that prelate, and two others, to lay their complaints before Henry, then residing at Baieux in Normandy. The king foresaw that his whole plan of operations was overthrown, and that the dangerous contest between the civil and ecclesiastical powers must come to an immediate and decisive issue. In his indignation, he could not help exclaiming with great warmth, "That he was an unhappy prince, who maintained a number of lazy insignificant persons about him, none of whom had gratitude or spirit enough to revenge him on a single insolent prelate who gave him such disturbance." These words were heard by four

<sup>9</sup> Stephan. 73.—Ep. v. 73.



gentlemen of the court, Reginald Fitz-Urse, William de Tracy, Richard Britow, and Hugh de Morville, and taking them as a hint, they immediately formed a design against the archbishop's life.

Before leaving France, some expressions which they had dropt gave a suspicion of their design, and the king despatched a messenger after them, charging them to attempt nothing against the person of the primate; but these orders arrived too late to prevent the fatal deed. The four assassins, though they took different roads to England, arrived almost at the same time (29th December, 1170) at Saltwoode, near Canterbury;<sup>10</sup> and being there joined by some assistants, they proceeded in great haste to the archiepiscopal palace and found the primate but very slenderly attended. They told him they came from the king to command him to absolve the bishops under censure. Becket replied that it was not within the authority of an inferior jurisdiction to set aside the sentence of a superior court, and that the pope's censure could not be reversed but by the pope himself. This answer not satisfying them, they charged the monks of Canterbury, in the king's name, to keep the archbishop safe, that he might be forthcoming, and then departed with a menacing air. The same evening they returned to the palace, and leaving a body of soldiers in the court-yard, rushed into the cloister with their swords drawn, and from thence into the church, where the archbishop was at vespers. "Where is the traitor?" they exclaimed, and nobody answering, they asked for the archbishop; upon which Becket moved towards them, without showing the least sign of fear, and told them he was the person. When one of them threatened him with death, he coolly answered he was prepared to die for the cause of God, and in defence of the rights of the church; "but," added he, "if you must have my life, I charge you not to hurt any other person here, either clergy or laity, for none of them have any concern in the late transactions." The assassins immediately laid hands on him, and offered to drag him out of the church, but finding it could not be done without difficulty, they despatched him on the spot. He made no resistance, and though his head was cloven with several wounds, he never gave a groan nor offered to avoid a stroke.<sup>11</sup> He was only in the fifty-third year of his age. One of his attendants, a clergyman belonging to the cathedral, having interposed his arm to ward off a blow, had it nearly cut off. The murderers afraid they had gone too far, durst not return to the king's court in Normandy, but rather chose to withdraw to Knaresborough, to a tower belonging to Hugh de Morville. Here they continued till they found themselves the aversion and contempt of the country, for nobody would hold conversation or eat or drink with them. Justice, we should have thought, would soon have overtaken their crime, but there was no law to inflict capital punishment on any person who had killed a member of the church, the clergy having exempted themselves from the king's jurisdiction. Tired of solitude and public neglect, they took a journey to Rome, and being admitted to penance, they went to Jerusalem, where they spent the remainder of their lives in penitential austerities. The body of Becket, which the assassins had hesitated whether to throw into the sea or cut into small pieces, was buried by the monks and friars in a vault of the cathedral.

<sup>10</sup> Gervase, 1414.

<sup>11</sup> Stephan. 81—88.—Quadrilogus, 111. 19—18.—Gervase, 1415.

The intelligence of the murder threw Henry into the greatest consternation. He was fully sensible of the dangerous consequences which he had reason to apprehend from so unexpected an event, and as it was extremely his interest to clear himself from all suspicion, he took no care to conceal the depth of his affliction. He shut himself up in his chamber, suspended all intercourse with his servants, and even refused, during three days, food or sustenance of any kind. But the point of chief importance was to convince the pope of his innocence, and for this purpose he immediately despatched an embassy to Rome. Alexander was highly incensed at the king, and stimulated to revenge by the letters he received from the partisans of Becket. The king of France wrote to his holiness 'to draw St Peter's sword against Henry, and to study some new and exemplary justice;' others were equally urgent, and moved for an interdict upon his dominions. But the ambassadors found means so far to appease the pontiff, as to avoid the terrible blow of excommunication, having made oath before the whole consistory that their prince was innocent, and that he would stand to the pope's judgment in the affair, and make every submission that should be required of him. Accordingly, on returning to England next year, Henry repaired to Canterbury where he did penance, and underwent a voluntary discipline in testimony of his regret for the murder. When he came within sight of the cathedral where the body was buried, he alighted from his horse and walked barefoot in the habit of a pilgrim till he came to Becket's tomb, where, after he had prostrated himself and prayed for a considerable time, he submitted to be scourged by the monks, and passed all that day and night kneeling on the bare stones without any refreshment. For nearly a year after Becket's death, all divine offices ceased in the church of Canterbury until it was re-consecrated by order of the pope. In 1173 he was canonized by a papal bull, and a particular collect was appointed to be used in all the churches within the province for expiating the guilt of the murder of that 'blessed martyr and bishop!'<sup>12</sup> In 1221, the body was taken up in presence of Henry III. and a great concourse of the nobility and others, and deposited in a rich shrine on the east side of the church, erected at the expense of Stephen Langton, then archbishop of Canterbury. His shrine was visited from all parts, and enriched with the most costly offerings. Pilgrimages were performed to obtain his intercession with heaven, and in one year it was computed that above 100,000 of these pious devotees visited Canterbury. The miracles said to have been wrought at his tomb were so numerous, that Gervase of Canterbury tells us there were two large volumes filled with them kept in that church.

A character so extraordinary was sure to be variously represented according as the portrait was drawn by friends or enemies. Most contemporary writers justify his conduct throughout and make him a glorious martyr. The clergy extolled the greatness of his sanctity and his merits, exalting him far above all the 'cloud of witnesses' who had by their blood cemented the fabric of the church. Later writers, however, have set his character in a very disadvantageous light, accusing him of insolence, bigotry, perjury and treason, both against his king and his country. In the main ground of the quarrel, that of requiring

<sup>12</sup> Forty-eight years after his decease, the doctors of the university of Paris had a warm dispute whether he was saved or damned.

ecclesiastics, guilty of felony, murder, or other high crimes, to be punished directly by the secular magistrate, it cannot be denied that the English constitution afforded several precedents in favour of the archbishop's opinion. Alfred executed a judge for trying and condemning a clerk; and in the contest between Anselm and William, it was taken for granted that none but the pope had a right to try the archbishop. But allowing all this, the exemption of clerks from the civil courts was no right inseparable from their order, but only a privilege granted them by the crown, and therefore revokable by the same authority. From all which it follows, that whatever may be said of Becket's opposition at first, yet after the parliament of Clarendon had enacted, "that clerks should be tried in the king's courts," he ought not to have insisted upon the prior exemption. As to the other parts of his conduct, his first signing and then renouncing the articles of Clarendon,—his quitting the kingdom without the royal permission,—his refusing to return to his see upon the best terms enjoyed by any of his predecessors,—his breaking off the accommodation only for being denied the kiss of peace,—and similar instances of violence and obstinate inflexibility,—these can neither be palliated nor defended. That he was a man of great talents and invincible courage is incontestable, but he was of a most ambitious and turbulent spirit, excessively passionate, haughty and ostentatious, ungrateful in his disposition, and implacable in his resentments. From the cunning and falsehood he occasionally evinced, as well as from his sudden change of life from gaiety and splendour to retirement and abstinence, we can hardly help suspecting that he only became the champion of the church from an ambitious desire of sharing its power,—a power more independent of court favour than the chancellorship, and therefore more agreeable to the pride and haughtiness of his temper. He certainly would have been the most extraordinary person of his age had he been allowed to remain in his first station, and had he directed the vehemence of his character to the support of law and justice, instead of being engaged by the prejudices of the times to sacrifice all private obligations and public connexions to duties which he imagined or represented as superior to every civil and political consideration. As to the endless panegyrics on his virtues, it is, indeed, a mortifying reflection to those who are actuated by the love of fame, that the wisest legislator and most exalted genius that ever reformed or enlightened the world, can never expect such eulogies as has been conferred on pretended saints, whose whole conduct was probably to the last degree odious or contemptible, and whose industry was entirely directed to the pursuit of objects pernicious to mankind. Becket was also the subject of poetical legends; a work entitled, 'Lives of the Saints,' in verse, contains an account of his martyrdom and translation. If this author is to be credited, the archbishop was a scholar and had his palace filled with literary men, who passed their time there in reading, disputing, and deciding important questions of the state.



## Archbishop Langton.

DIED A. D. 1228.

STEPHEN DE LANGTON, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reigns of John and Henry, and one of the ablest men who ever filled the primacy of England, was educated at the university of Paris, where he afterwards taught divinity, and prelected upon the sacred writings with much reputation. After some years spent in this way, he was chosen chancellor of the university, canon of Paris, and dean of Rheims. His reputation having reached Rome, he was sent for by Pope Innocent III., who marked his sense of his merits by bestowing upon him the dignity of a cardinal with the title of St Chrysagonus.

We have adverted in our notice of king John, to the contest which arose betwixt the monks of Canterbury and the suffragan prelates of that diocese upon the occasion of electing a successor to Archbishop Hubert. On the cause being carried to Rome, on the mutual appeal of both parties, the pope decided against the claims of both pretenders to the primacy, and ordered the monks who had been deputed to maintain the cause of their brethren to elect Langton. Innocent had reason to suppose that the choice would not be disagreeable to the king of England, who had frequently written to the cardinal in terms of the highest esteem; but no answer having been returned by the envoys whom he sent to England to solicit John's approbation of the prelate-elect, he proceeded to consecrate him at Viterbo, on the 27th of June, 1207.<sup>1</sup>

On the arrival of the bull intimating the election and consecration of the cardinal, John, who had favoured the elevation of John de Gracy, bishop of Norwich, to the vacant primacy, was inflamed with rage, and vented his passion on the monks of Christchurch, whom he drove into exile. He then wrote a spirited and angry letter to the pope, in which he accused the holy father of injustice and presumption in raising a stranger to the highest dignity in his kingdom without his knowledge or consent. He reminded his holiness of the extent of revenue which he drew from England; and assured him that unless he immediately repaired the injury he had done him, he would break off all communication betwixt his kingdom and Rome.<sup>2</sup> To this letter Innocent immediately returned a long answer, in which he exhorted the king not to oppose God and the church any longer, and plainly told him that if he persisted in his obstinacy, he would plunge himself into inextricable difficulties, and would at length be crushed by a power, which no one could hope to resist with success. The quarrel had now become a trial of strength between the power of the king and that of the pontiff. John remained firm even under the dreadful threat of interdiction, which was at last pronounced against him, as already related. While the king continued to hold out against the head of the church, Langton abode at Pontigny in France, whither several of the English bishops hastened to pay their submissions to him as their primate. The king ultimately solicited a conference with Langton at Dover, and offered to acknowledge him as primate; but the parties could not agree as to the article

<sup>1</sup> M. Paris, 155.

<sup>2</sup> M. Paris, 157.

of reparation and restitution to the clergy, and the negotiations were finally broke off. The archbishop and prelates now united in a representation to the pope, in which they described their own wrongs in forcible terms, and urged the necessity of adopting strong measures against John. Innocent, who required little persuasion on this point, immediately pronounced sentence of deposition against John, and absolved his vassals from their oaths of fealty.<sup>3</sup>

The mission of Pandolf, as pope's legate, and the formidable preparations made by the king of France to put in execution the pope's sentence of deposition, at last overcame John's obstinacy; and in July 1213, the prelates who had abandoned their country during the sovereign's contumacy, returned in great triumph to England with Langton at their head. The king met them at Winchester; and Langton publicly revoked the sentence of excommunication which had been pronounced against him;<sup>4</sup> but the interdict was continued until removed by the pope's legate with great solemnity, in the cathedral of St Paul's, on the 29th of June 1214.

Langton's first interference in political affairs places his character in a most respectable light. The barons were now beginning to demand the restoration of their privileges, and the revival of the ancient charters; and with this view, instead of obeying the call of their sovereign to accompany him in an expedition against France, had assembled in council at St Albans, and issued their resolutions in the form of royal proclamations. John determined to punish their disobedience by military execution; and had advanced as far as Northampton for this purpose, when he was overtaken by the primate, who reminded him that it was the right of the accused to be tried and judged by their peers. "Rule you the church, and leave me to govern the state," was the answer of the king, who continued his march to Nottingham, where he was again assailed by Langton, who at last, by threatening him with excommunication, succeeded in diverting him from his rash purpose. Three weeks after this the barons again met at St Paul's in London, when Langton read to them the charter of Henry I., and commenting on its provisions, showed them that its enforcement would still secure their liberties. The barons responded to the primate's address with loud acclamations and expressions of their determination to be guided by his advice; and the archbishop, taking advantage of their enthusiasm, administered to them an oath, by which they bound themselves to support each other, and to conquer or die in the defence of their liberties.<sup>5</sup>

From the first moment of his engaging in politics, Langton attached himself to the popular side, and evinced the most enlightened and zealous regard for the liberties of his country. His exertions were mainly instrumental in procuring the great charter at Runnymede, while at the same time, he not unfrequently interfered to moderate the violence of the more impetuous and headstrong barons, and showed that he was friendly to the legal prerogatives of the crown. His patriotic conduct gave so much offence to the pope, that, in 1215, he laid him under a sentence of suspension, and reversed the election of his brother

<sup>3</sup> M. Paris, 161.

<sup>4</sup> Ep. Innocent, p. 827.

<sup>5</sup> Ann. Waver. 178.

Simon, who had been chosen archbishop of York. Yet, in the following year, we find Langton assisting at a general council held at Rome.

In the succeeding reign he recovered his rank and authority, and from this period he chiefly confined his attention to ecclesiastical concerns. In the 6th year of Henry's reign, he held a synod at Oxford, at which he published a new code of discipline consisting of forty-two canons, one of which, prohibiting clergymen from publicly keeping concubines, sufficiently illustrates the manners of the age. In this synod, a clergyman in deacon's orders was convicted of apostacy, delivered to the secular power, and condemned to be burnt. He had suffered himself to be circumcised that he might marry a Jewish woman.<sup>6</sup> At the call of the barons, in 1213, Langton readily placed himself again at their head, and demanded an audience of Henry, to obtain a confirmation from him of the charters. He died on the 9th of July, 1228.

Langton was a learned and polished writer. His works have not been collected, but they are said to exist in MS. in various public libraries. He wrote commentaries upon the greater part of the books of Scripture, into which he contrived to infuse a large portion of the fashionable dialectics of his age. He is said to have first divided the Bible into chapters.<sup>7</sup> M. de la Rue, in his dissertation on the Anglo-Norman poets of the 13th century,<sup>8</sup> has placed Langton at the top of the list, and has quoted the first proof of his poetical talents from the stanza of a song introduced in one of his sermons upon the holy virgin. It appears that whole discourses in French verse were then not unusual, which is one of the strongest proofs that could be offered of the very general taste for French poetry, and familiar acquaintance with the language, which must have pervaded all ranks of people in England at that time. In the same MS. which contains this sermon, are two other pieces which have been ascribed to the archbishop. The first is a theological drama, in which Truth, Justice, Mercy, and Peace, debate among themselves what ought to be the fate of Adam after his fall. The second is a canticle on the passion of Jesus Christ, in 123 stanzas, making more than 600 verses. M. de la Rue suggests, that the 10th verse of the 80th psalm, furnished the poet with the idea of the former of these pieces, and says that he has worked it up with equal taste and delicacy.

## Bishop Grosseteste.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1175.—DIED A. D. 1253.

ROBERT GROSSETESTE, one of the lights of a dark age, was born of obscure parentage at Shadbrook in Suffolk, about the year 1175. He studied at Oxford, where he acquired a knowledge of Greek, and was thus enabled to grapple with Aristotle in the original, whose works had been chiefly read in translation. Here also Grosseteste mastered the Hebrew. He then visited Paris, where he added to Greek and Hebrew the knowledge of the French tongue. He at the same time prosecuted, with the most indefatigable industry, the study of philosophy

Wikes, 39. <sup>7</sup> Knyghton, apud Script. col. 2430. <sup>8</sup> See *Archæologia*, vol. xiii. art. 23.



and theology; and some estimate may be formed of the extent of his attainments from the fact that they were attributed to magic. This accusation, as is well known, was not unusually brought against men of profound knowledge, whose erudition seemed to wondering ignorance impossible to be attained in any other way. On his return to Oxford, Grosseteste became the first lecturer in the Franciscan school in that university.

So honest and so undisguised was his opposition to ecclesiastical abuses, that he was once actually excommunicated by the convent of Canterbury. This sentence he treated with the contempt it deserved; it neither abated his zeal, nor shook his perseverance. Though the hypocrisy of the Dominican and Franciscan friars imposed upon him for a time, he at length began to detect it, and became convinced that ecclesiastics might be guilty of other crimes besides those of licentiousness, and be destitute of humility and piety, though clothed in sack-cloth, and ostentatious of their poverty. In the year 1247, two Franciscans, commissioned by the pope, and furnished with regular credentials, were sent into England to extort money. They modestly demanded of Grosseteste 6000 marks as the quota for the see of Lincoln. He did not hesitate to refuse compliance with this insolent demand, and told his visitors, though agents from the vatican, that it was as dishonourable to require such a sum, as it would be impracticable to levy it. In 1248, after much trouble he obtained, from Pope Innocent IV., leave to reform the religious orders.<sup>1</sup> Thus authorized, he proceeded to institute a rigorous investigation of the revenues of the religious houses, the rents of which he resolved to take into his own hands, intending to distribute them in a more beneficial manner. The monks, as usual, resisted such an unprofitable innovation; and as they appealed to the pope, Grosseteste was compelled to repair to Lyons to meet him. The pontiff not only decided against the English prelate, but added insult to injustice. Grosseteste warmly retorted, almost accused the papal court of bribery, and in a remonstrance which he left behind him, fully exposed its abominable abuses. He particularly inveighed against the infamous *non obstante* clause—that ingenious expedient by which his holiness was enabled to dispense with oaths and promises, customs and statutes,—all that is sacred in the Word of God, or the laws of man. At this period, the ascendancy which the court of Rome had attained over the English church was unbounded, and was the necessary consequence of the concessions made by King John and Henry the Third. No stronger proof of the extent of this usurpation can be imagined, than the fact, that many of the richest benefices in England were conferred upon Italians—men absolutely ignorant of our language—favourites, and in some cases, relations of the pope. Grosseteste, incensed at such a flagrant abuse of power, has been known, upon some occasions, to throw from him in scorn the bulls commanding this shameless appropriation of church property. At length the pope and the bishops came to an open rupture. Grosseteste, it seems, had received an order from the pontiff to promote his nephew, then a mere boy, to the first vacant canonry in the cathedral of Lincoln. The pope apparently suspecting opposition from his refractory servant, enjoined his agents, by

<sup>1</sup> Gross Ep. 113, 114.

the *non obstante* clause, to see this arrangement effected. To this barefaced attempt Grosseteste offered the most spirited resistance. He immediately wrote to the pope. This letter contained an explicit refusal to comply with this request, couched in the strongest terms, and a cutting reproof of the flagitious conduct of the pontiff. This bold reply threw the pope into a paroxysm of rage. The cardinals endeavoured to soothe him, though, it must be confessed, their topics of consolation were rather oddly chosen. They frankly assured him that he would get nothing by quarrelling with the English prelate; that for learning, piety, honesty and worth, he had not his match in Christendom; and that all he had asserted was substantially true. The pope, however, was not to be reasoned with, especially when arguments were so humbling; and proceeded, therefore, to launch his thunderbolts against the bishop, but they harmed him not. He viewed with pity or contempt the impotent malice of the enraged pontiff, and retained quiet possession of his dignity.

In the summer of 1253, he was taken ill at Buckden. From this attack he did not recover. He lingered till October 9th of the same year, when he died.<sup>2</sup> The corpse was taken to Lincoln. On his death-bed, he displayed the same unshaken courage and fortitude which had distinguished his whole life. Conscious of his own integrity in his disputes with the pope, he retracted not a syllable of what he had said,—he repented of nothing he had done,—nay, he is reported in his last moments to have inveighed in the strongest terms against the gigantic abuses of the papacy, and even to have denounced the pope as Anti-christ.<sup>3</sup> The pope was of course rejoiced to hear of his death, and, with the characteristic malice of a little mind, ordered his remains to be disinterred and burnt. The letter, however, containing this order was not sent. It is needless to say that Grosseteste never arrived at the honours of canonization. But he needed no such ‘damning’ honours; posterity has spontaneously done him that justice which Rome denied him. Grosseteste did not surpass the ecclesiastics of his age more in judgment, piety and integrity than in learning. Old age found the ardour with which he had sought knowledge when a youth, still undiminished. His acquaintance with all branches of learning was very extensive; but his favourite pursuits seem to have been logic, philosophy and theology. He also possessed—what was, alas! a rare attainment in those days,—an accurate knowledge of the scriptures. His writings are very voluminous. The mere catalogue occupies not less than twenty-five quarto pages in Dr Pegge’s life of him.

Of Bishop Grosseteste it is impossible to form a correct opinion without carefully remembering the circumstances of the age in which he lived, and estimating the various influences which concurred in the formation of his character. That he held many absurd dogmas of the church of Rome,—that he saw not a tenth part of the enormities of that system against which he was partially opposed, will not appear wonderful to any one who reflects how slowly the human mind extricates itself from error—especially religious error—and how gradually it arrives at truth. That Grosseteste saw more than could have been reasonably expected in such circumstances, and in such an age, will be

<sup>2</sup> M. Paris, 586.

1b.

readily admitted by every candid mind ; and, could he have added to the zeal of his youth the knowledge and experience of his maturer years, he would have advanced much farther. At one time his opinions on the subject of the papal prerogative were almost as absurd as those he entertained concerning the leading dogmas of the Romish superstition. The former he lived to correct in a great measure ; a few more years would have done the same for the latter.

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### III. LITERARY SERIES.

#### *William of Malmesbury.*

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1095.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1143.

THE most valuable part of the literature of the Anglo-Norman period, is unquestionably the extensive series of national annals, chronicles, and histories, composed by monkish writers. It is true, that to enlarged and philosophical views of history, these works possess no claim whatever, and that even in respect of literary talent they cannot be ranked very high ; they are also deeply tinged with the superstitious credulity of the times ; but then, to use the words of Turner, “such a series of regular chronology and true incident,—such faithful, clear, and ample materials for authentic history,—had scarcely appeared before : nothing could be more contemptible as compositions,—nothing could be more satisfactory as authorities.” A few brief sketches of the principal of these chroniclers, with one or two other notices, is all that our limits will permit us to attempt.

An interval of upwards of two centuries intervened from the introduction of Christianity into England, before any national historian arose. Anglo-Saxon history, properly so called, begins with Gildas, surnamed the Wise, who seems to have written before the commencement of the 6th century. Nennius has been placed by some writers in the same era with Gildas, but he wrote in the year 858. From Gildas, until the 8th century, the only notices of English history we possess are contained in the odes of the British bards. The first Anglo-Saxon chronicle now extant, to which any certain date or certain origin can be ascribed, is the ecclesiastical history of Bede, already noticed. It is impossible to pronounce with certainty where the existing text of the Saxon chronicle was first formed. Wheloc formed the text which he has printed under the title of ‘*Chronologia Saxonica*,’ from two manuscripts, one in the Bennet library, and one in the Cottonian library, both of which may be referred to the 9th century. It was continued from time to time, by various writers, to the reign of Henry II. In the history compiled by Ethelweard, we have a very abridged translation of the Saxon chronicle. Florence of Worcester, who wrote in the reign of Henry I., translates the Saxon chronicle closely to the period where the chronicle of Asser begins ; he then transcribes the work of the British prelate, but returns to the Saxon



chronicle as soon as Asser concludes. His contemporary, Simeon of Durham, commences with the death of Bede, and carries on till the death of Stephen. Henry, archdeacon of Huntingdon, divides his history into books, and treats distinctly of each of the kingdoms of the heptarchy until their union under Edgar. He states that, taking Bede as his basis, he added much from other sources, and borrowed from the chronicles which he found in ancient libraries. The historical writings of Ingulphus, abbot of Croyland, are now, with apparent reason, regarded as monkish forgeries.

William of Malmesbury, one of the fathers of English history, flourished during the first half of the twelfth century. He was born in Somersetshire, and from that circumstance is called also occasionally Somersetanus, but the date of his birth is uncertain. Mr Sharpe, the translator of his 'History,' thinks it probable that he was born about the year 1095. If this date is any thing near the truth, it seems reasonable to extend the assigned date of his death, viz. 1143, a few years at least, otherwise he must have died at the early age of 48; and indeed when it is considered that he only completed the last of his historical pieces in 1142, and that he subsequently made several corrections upon it, it may fairly be presumed that he lived several years after this latter date. He was descended, he informs us, from Saxon and Norman parents. When a child he discovered a fondness for learning in which he was encouraged by his father; and while yet a boy, he was placed for his education in the monastery, from which he afterwards received his name, and in which he filled the office of librarian. Here, in addition to the study of the Latin language, he applied himself to logic, medicine, and ethics, but history soon became his favourite and almost engrossing study.

The manner in which he conceived and executed the idea of those historical works by which he is known, cannot be better described than in his own modest and simple terms, which we shall quote from Mr Sharpe's translation.<sup>1</sup> "When at my own expense," says he, "I had procured some historians of foreign nations, I proceeded, during my domestic leisure, to inquire if any thing concerning our own country could be found, worthy of handing down to posterity. Hence it arose, that, not content with the writings of ancient times, I began, myself, to compose; not indeed to display my learning—which is indeed comparatively nothing—but to bring to light events lying concealed in the confused mass of antiquity. In consequence, rejecting vague opinions, I have studiously sought for chronicles far and near, though I confess I have scarcely profited any thing by this industry. For perusing them all, I still remained poor in information; though I ceased not my researches as long as I could find any thing to read. However, what I have clearly ascertained concerning the four kingdoms I have inserted in my first book, in which I hope truth will find no cause to blush, though perhaps a degree of doubt may sometimes arise. I shall now trace the monarchy of the West-Saxon kingdom, through the line of successive princes, down to the coming of the Normans: which if any person will condescend to regard with complacency, let him in brotherly love observe the following rule: 'If before he knew only these things,

<sup>1</sup> London, 1815, 4to.

let him not be disgusted because I have inserted them; if he shall know more, let him not be angry that I have not spoken of them, but rather let him communicate his knowledge to me while I yet live, that, at least those events may appear in the margin of my history, which do not occur in the text.”

To the resolution announced in this extract we are indebted for his valuable work ‘*De Regibus Anglorum*,’ being a general history of England, in five books, commencing with the arrival of the Saxons in 449, and concluding with the 26th year of Henry I. To this work he subsequently added other two books of modern history, as he called it, in which the history of his country is carried down from 1126, to the escape of the empress Maud from Oxford, during the civil wars, in 1143. Both these performances were composed according to the universal fashion of the times, in Latin; and their author’s Latinity is pure beyond that of most of his contemporaries. They were published in the original, in Sir Henry Saville’s collection of historical writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, entitled ‘*Scriptores post Bedam*,’ London, 1596; and also subsequently at Frankfort in 1601. Besides these, Malmesbury wrote a church-history in four books, and some Scriptural expositions, which are preserved in Gale’s ‘*Rerum Anglicarum Scriptores*,’ Oxford, 1684.

“Few historians,” says Andrews,<sup>2</sup> “have been so highly and so deservedly praised as this modest friar.” To patient and extensive research, he added the prime quality of an historian, veracity; and although he does not always avoid the marvellous, yet, considering the character of the age in which he lived, it would be doing him great injustice to represent him as a credulous author. Both Lyttleton and Hume have borne ample testimony to his worth as an historian, and the numerous references to his pages which occur in their writings, and in all our modern historians, furnish decisive proof of the value of his contributions to the historical literature of his country.

## Robert Pullen.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1090,—DIED A. D. 1150.

ROBERT PULLEN, or WHITE, “whose memory,” says honest John of Salisbury, “is pleasant to all good men, and whom the apostolic seat made a chancellor from a scholastic doctor,”<sup>1</sup> flourished in the 12th century, and distinguished himself as a zealous student and promoter of learning. Fuller reckons him an Oxfordshire man. In his youth he studied at Paris,<sup>2</sup> where he subsequently gave lectures in philosophy and theology to crowded audiences. About 1136, at the invitation of Asceline, bishop of Rochester, he returned to England, where his exertions mainly contributed to the restoration of that school of learning after it had been nearly ruined by the Danes. He is said to have prelected on the Scriptures and the works of Aristotle. Henry I. patronised him; and Asceline bestowed on him the archdeaconry of Rochester. After this he returned to Paris, where he filled the divinity chair in its then cele-

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of Great Britain, p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> Metalog. p. 746.

<sup>3</sup> Simeon Dunelm. apud Decem. Script. col. 275.

brated university. His metropolitan recalled him from this employment; and on his manifesting some reluctance to obey the summons, ordered the revenues of his benefice to be sequestrated until he should present himself. The archdeacon appealed from his superior to the see of Rome, and sentence was pronounced in his favour. The fame of his great learning induced Pope Innocent II. to invite him to Rome, where he was received with great marks of favour. In 1144, Celestine II. created him cardinal, and Lucius II. afterwards made him chancellor of the Roman church. He was esteemed the most learned of all the college of cardinals. He died in 1150. The only work of his known to be now extant, is his 'Book of Sentences,' which was published at Paris in 1655. It contains a summary of Christian theology, and probably furnished the model for the more celebrated 'Sententiarum Liber,' of his successor Peter Lombard. Its most pleasing character is the deference it exhibits to the simple authority of scripture.<sup>3</sup>

## John of Salisbury.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1116.—DIED A. D. 1182.

JOHN of Salisbury, one of the greatest ornaments of the 12th century, was born at Old Sarum—whence he derived the name of Sarisburiensis—about the year 1116. He received his early education in England, and went to the university of Paris for his further improvement, in 1136.<sup>1</sup> In this famous seat of learning he spent no fewer than twelve years, in attendance upon the lectures of Abelard, and other eminent scholars, and acquired an uncommon amount of knowledge for the time in which he lived, both in philosophy and letters. His poverty obliged him to have recourse to the usual shift of a poor student,—the preceptorship of his juniors; yet he managed to obtain for himself the most liberal education which Europe could afford, and to his knowledge of languages, added—what was exceedingly rare in such an age—some acquaintance with Greek and Hebrew. The account which he gives of his studies in his 'Metalogicus,' shows the laborious application with which the scholars of the middle ages pursued the knowledge they valued. He says that he first went to the Peripatetic school at Paris, where he studied logic. He then proceeded to dialectics under Master Alberic, whom he styles 'Opinatissimus Dialecticus.' He was two years with him, and Robert Metridensis, an Englishman. He next transferred himself to William De Conchia, a grammarian. After this he followed Richard, called the bishop, going over the quadrivium, and what he had learned from others with him. At this stage of his studies he also heard the German Harduin. He next revised his rhetoric with Peter Helias, and then resumed the study of logic with William of Soissons. Returning at the end of three years, he heard Master Gilbert prelect on logic and divinity, and from him proceeded to Robert Pullen and Simon Periacensis, under both of whom he studied theology. On returning to England, he embraced the

<sup>3</sup> Dupin, cent. xii. cap. 15.

<sup>1</sup> Sarisburiensis. Metalog. lib. ii. c. 10



monastic life at Canterbury, but first studied the civil law under Vacarius, then teaching with great applause at Oxford,<sup>2</sup> and thus qualified himself in an eminent degree for his subsequent intimacy with the leading prelates of the kingdom, Archbishop Theobald, and his successor Becket. To the latter of these eminent men he dedicated his famous 'Polycraticon,' or treatise "De nugis curialium, et vestigiis philosophorum," in which he keenly satirises the manners of the age, and the pretensions of the schoolmen. This work is indeed a curious and valuable monument of English literature in the 12th century; and it is impossible to peruse it without admiring the extensive and varied erudition of its author, and perceiving how far he was in advance of the general spirit of the times.

His connexion with Archbishop Becket involved him in many troubles; he was the very first person whom Henry II. sent into exile on account of his known attachment to that prelate. He continued nearly seven years abroad, during which time many dazzling offers were made to him, to induce him to desert the cause of his friend, and return to England; but, although he had repeatedly declared that he did not approve of the archbishop's conduct in every instance, yet he rejected with scorn every proposal which implied the desertion of his friend and patron in the hour of adversity, and devoted his whole time and abilities to negotiating the archbishop's affairs in Italy and France. In one of these journeys he was admitted to a familiar interview with his countryman, Pope Adrian IV., who condescended to inquire at him in what estimation the public generally held the successor of Peter and the holy Roman church. If John's own account of the conversation may be credited, he returned an answer to this interrogatory which would have been admired in the boldest of the reformers of the 16th century: he says that he told all the truth to his holiness, and assured him that the public thought, "the pope himself was a burthen too great for whole Christendom to bear."

He returned into England a little before the archbishop, and was a mournful spectator of the murder of his friend, from whom he endeavoured, at the risk of his own life, to ward off the blow of the assassins. In 1172, he was promoted to the bishopric of Chartres through his interest with the archbishop of Sens.<sup>3</sup> He died in the enjoyment of this dignity, in 1182.

Besides the works above mentioned, John composed several other treatises. A collection of his letters, consisting of above 300, many of them addressed to the first personages of the age, was published at Paris in 1611. The 'Polycraticon' was published at Paris in 1513, and also at Leyden in 1595, and again in 1639. A French translation of it appeared at Paris in 1640, under the title of 'Les Vanitez de la Cour.' His style is polished and classical to a surprising degree for the time in which he wrote.<sup>4</sup> Throughout his writings there are also evidences of a vigorous understanding, and a mind much above the weak philosophy of his age. Of this there is sound evidence in his account

<sup>2</sup> Seldeni Dissert. in Flet. cap. xii. sect. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Bulæi Hist. Univ. Paris. Tom. ii. p. 394.

<sup>4</sup> Stephanus often quotes him in his notes on Saxo, and with these eulogiums,—'aureus scriptor,'—'elegantior ut omnia,'—'auctor cum veterum quopiam comparandus,' p. 151.

of a visit which he made to some of the companions of his earlier studies, long after he had familiarised himself with the philosophy of the schools. "I found them," says he, "the same men, and in the same place; they had not advanced a single step towards resolving our ancient questions, nor added a single proposition, however small, to their stock of knowledge. Whence I inferred," he adds with great truth, "what indeed it was easy to collect, that dialectic studies, however useful they may be when united to other branches of knowledge, are in themselves barren and unprofitable."

## Geoffrey of Monmouth.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1152.

GEOFFREY, or JEFFERY, of Monmouth, a celebrated British historian, flourished in the reign of Henry I. He was born at Monmouth, and probably received his education in the Benedictine monastery near that place, where tradition still points out the vestiges of a small apartment which is said to have formed his study; unfortunately, however, the building thus indicated is evidently of an age greatly posterior to the time of our historian. He rose successively to the archdeaconry of Monmouth and bishopric of St Asaph, to the latter of which dignities he was promoted in the year 1152. He is said by the Magdeburg centuriators to have been raised to the dignity of a cardinal also, but of this there is no clear evidence. It is certain, however, that he was warmly patronised, both in his ecclesiastical and literary capacity, by some of the most influential personages of the age, and amongst others by Robert, earl of Gloucester, and Alexander, bishop of Lincoln.

Considerable obscurity hangs over the real origin of the historical work, or chronicle, with which his name is associated. Leland, Bale, Pits, and Price, inform us that Walter Mapes, or Calenius, then archdeacon of Oxford, and a man like Geoffrey himself, of curious research into the history of past times, having collected, during his travels in Armorica, a considerable mass of materials illustrative of early British history, placed them in the hands of Geoffrey of Monmouth, for the purpose of getting them translated and arranged by that scholar, whose previous studies were known to have eminently qualified him for the task. Nothing could have been more gratifying to Geoffrey than such a commission; he addressed himself with eagerness to the task, and in a short time produced chiefly from the materials which had been thus supplied to him, a chronicle of Britain in Latin prose, and a life of the Caledonian Merlin in Latin hexameters.<sup>1</sup>

There are two editions of Geoffrey's chronicle extant in Latin, one of which was published in 4to, by Ascensius, at Paris, in 1517; the other is included in Commeline's edition of the '*Rerum Britannicarum Scriptores*,' published at Heidelberg in 1587, folio. A translation of the chronicle, by Aaron Thompson, was published at London in 1718, 8vo. Geoffrey also appears to have meditated the translation of a third

<sup>1</sup> Bale ii. 65.—Thompson's preface to Jeffrey's Hist. Lond. 1718, p. 30.

work on the migration of the British clergy to Armorica; but whether he ever executed this design is unknown.

Matthew Paris declares, that in all these works Geoffrey approved himself a faithful translator. But William of Newburgh, Buchanan, Baronius, and others, maintain that he invented a very considerable part of the chronicle, which he professed to translate from a British original; and Turner has adopted the same opinion. "I believe," says this very respectable historian, "the book of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who lived in the twelfth century, to be his own composition, and to abound with fable."<sup>2</sup> Yet, as Mr Ellis remarks,<sup>3</sup> it is not easy to reconcile the foregoing passage with the following from the same author:—"I believe Geoffrey to state the fact when he says he found the history of Arthur in a book brought from that country (Bretagne)." The argument drawn by those inclined to cast suspicion on our chronicler from the outrageously coloured tales with which the work abounds, may, it is clear, be quite as good evidence on the other side; the probability is even greater that those wild fables and fictions were the invention of that earlier chronicler for whom Geoffrey professes he performed the office of a translator, than of the translator himself. Geoffrey nowhere exhibits the slightest solicitude to establish the authenticity of any portion of the chronicle. He urges the simple fact, that what he now publishes is translated from the text of a native historian; and when he supplies some deficiencies in the original respecting the struggle for empire between Arthur and Modred, he is careful to state the fact.<sup>4</sup>

The chronicle is divided into nine books, the first of which, containing nearly a third of the work, extends from the birth of Brutus to the introduction of Christianity into Britain. The second book extends to the reign of Vortigern. The fourth is episodical, being a translation of Merlin's prophecies. The fifth narrates the reign of Aurelius Ambrosius. The sixth is dedicated to the reign of Uther. The seventh, and most important of the whole, is occupied by the reign of Arthur. The eighth relates the reigns of Constantine, Conan, Vortiporius, Malgo, and Catericus. The ninth, and concluding book, is occupied with the romantic adventures of Edwin and Cadwallo. The work is altogether an extremely entertaining one, whatever be its value as a contribution to the historical literature of the country. It was versified in the Norman dialect by Wace, and again in English by Layamon; and it is to it we owe the affecting story of Shakspeare's *Lear*, that of Sackville's *Ferrex and Pollux*, some of the finest episodes in the *Polyolbion*, and the exquisite fiction of *Sabrina* in the masque of *Comus*.

<sup>1</sup> Vindication of the Ancient British Poems, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> Specimens of early English Romance, vol. i. p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Mr Coxe, in his 'Tour in Monmouthshire,' informs us, that it is the opinion of the best Welsh critics that Geoffrey's work is a vitiated translation of a history of the British kings, written by Tyssilio, or St Talian, bishop of St Asaph, in the 7th century. But Lhuys is of opinion that Tyssilio's work was entirely ecclesiastical.



## Lapamon.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1180.

THE researches which have been made by literary antiquaries into the remote periods of our national history, have been productive of many interesting and not unuseful discoveries. They have enabled us to trace the dependance of literature on the various circumstances which modify men's characters and determine their condition: they have at the same time shown us how that of our own country has been formed, like a noble river from many small and confluent ones, by the junction of various streams of thought with that which was more properly original and peculiar to the nation. The history of poetry is intimately connected with that of language, particularly in the early stages of a nation's literature. It is probable that the reign of the Romans extinguished the spark of poetry which might exist in the country, instead of fanning it into flame or exciting any new feeling. The men who composed the legions were too civilized to admire the poetry of barbarians, but not sufficiently refined or educated to bring with them any literature of their own. The Saxons fought from different motives,—were in a condition far more favourable to the cultivation of poetry,—assimilated better with the native genius of England,—and introduced a language and modes of thinking more naturally in harmony with its wild and northern character. The union consequently of the British and Saxon dialects became close and permanent, and the language which was thence formed gained so firm a hold of the national mind, that two generations of conquerors were unable to loosen it. For a considerable period it remained unchanged and unmixed; and when the Danes flooded it, as it were, with a new vocabulary, it still retained its old and genuine characteristics. The Normans introduced a language altogether new; but, notwithstanding the efforts employed to destroy the Saxon, its words and idioms outlasted the dominion of the Conqueror, and have resisted for a thousand years every revolution both of power and of fashion.

It is thus that the labours of the inquirers who have explored the remote tracks of our literature, have led us by a broad line from one period to another, enabling us at every stage to see enough to satisfy a reasonable curiosity. Specimens even exist of the Danish-Saxon, which may be regarded as proof that that language was well cultivated, and that a taste for poetry, a perception of the sublime representations of Scripture, was possessed in a sufficient degree to lay the foundation of a literature. There is reason to believe that the Saxons, before the invasion of the Danes, had not neglected the study of poetry; and Camden, in his rare and curious volume entitled, 'Remaines concerning Britaine,' makes allusion to the skill which some, both of the native British and the Saxons, evinced in versification. After contending that "in grandity and gravity, in smoothness and propriety, in quickness and briefness," the poets of England are equal to any, he says, "this would easily appear if any lives were extant of that worthy British lady, Claudia Ruffina, so commended by Martial; or of Gildas, which Lilius Giraldus saw in the libraries of Italy; or of

old Chedmon, who, by divine inspiration, about the year 680, became so sweet a poet in our English tongue, that with his sweet verses full of compunction, he withdrew many from vice to virtue, and a religious fear of God; or of our Claudius Clemens, one of the first founders of the university of Paris." The specimens which he then gives from some later writers, prove that the feeling of poetry was not lost amid all the troubles which the nation had undergone; what, however, of the passages he extracts are from Latin poems, and he apologises for the uncouth expressions they occasionally exhibit, on the plea that the age was so overcast with the "thick fogs of ignorance, that every little spark of liberal learning seemed wonderful." Joseph of Exeter, who followed King Richard I. to Palestine, was one of the most celebrated poets of that age, and commemorated the acts of his master in a poem called 'Antiocheidos.'<sup>1</sup> John Hanvill, a monk of St Albans, was another writer who distinguished himself also in Latin verse;<sup>2</sup> as was also Felix, a monk of Crowland. In the descriptions of these early authors there is a certain strength and vivacity which amply atone for their want of classical correctness; and in the perusal of their remains the student of literary history will be often interested by discovering the germ of that style both of thought and expression, which is so genuine ly English.

It was, however, the great merit—as has been justly remarked—of the Saxons, before the Norman conquest, that they could express most aptly all the conceits of the mind in their own tongue, without borrowing from any. A curious proof is given of this in the words used to express the various objects of religious veneration. Thus, the word *gospel*, which means literally *God's speech*, was used instead of *evangelium*, or any modern derivative. The disciples of Christ were called *Leorning cuilctors*, that is, *learning servants*; and religion itself was termed *ean-fastnes*, "as the one and only assurance and fast anker-hold of our souls' health." The methods employed by the Normans to introduce their own tongue would have obliterated the traces of any less firmly rooted language, or of any less intrinsically adapted to perform the offices of such a species of machinery as human speech. But with all the arbitrary power which the conquerors used to effect their purpose, the utmost they could do was to engraft the Norman on the Saxon. The iron tongue of the North lost no particle of its true metal; and after French had long been employed not only in matters of public concern, but in the common intercourse of the better orders of society, the Saxon re-asserted its claims to superiority, and was acknowledged as the staple of the national language. Of the little favour it received from the invaders, the most convincing evidence exists in a variety of ancient documents. In Trevisa's translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, as quoted by Warton,<sup>3</sup> we find it distinctly declared, that it was a primary object in the education of children to prevent their knowing any language but French. "Children in scole," says the old author, "agenst the usage and manir of all other nations, beeth compelled for to lev hire owne language, and for to construe hir lessons and hire thynges in Frenche; and so they haveth sethe Normans came first into Engeland. Also gentilmen children beeth taught to speke

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 224.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 250.<sup>3</sup> *Hist. of English Poetry*, vol. i. sect. i. p. 5.

Frensche from the tyme that they bith rokked in here cradell, and kenneth speke and play with a childes broche: and uplondissche men will likne himself to gentylnen, and fondeth with great besynesse for to speke Frensche to be told of." But the strongest proof, perhaps, that could be given of the extent to which the Normans carried their violent proceedings in respect to the introduction of their language, is the fact, that in the year 1095, a bishop Wolstan of Worcester, was actually deprived of his see for his persevering attachment to his native tongue.<sup>4</sup>

There was, however, a harshness and a want of copiousness in the Saxon which admitted of its being modified without injury by the introduction of new words and modes of expression. We accordingly find that by the commencement of the 13th century poetry began to flow with a smoother melody, and to exhibit a greater variety of images. Some of the specimens to which the date has been affixed of the year 1200, are extremely beautiful in point of sentiment, and are couched in a language evidently rich in poetical expression. One of these contains the following description of spring:

Lenten ys come with love to tonne,  
With blosmen and with briddes ronne,  
That al this blisse bryngeth:  
Days ezes in this dales,  
Notes suete of nyhtegales,  
Uch foul songe singeth.

The threstlecoe hym threteth so,  
Away is heure winter wo,  
When woderove springeth;  
This foules singeth ferly fele,  
Ant wlyteth on heure wynter wele,  
That al the wode ryngeth.<sup>5</sup>

The following love-song will show that the versification had acquired a degree of smoothness when it was produced—which is supposed to have been in the reign of King John—that left little for the poets of a more refined age to effect:

When the nyhtegale singes the wodes waxen grene,  
Lef, and gras, and blosme, springes in Avril y wene;  
Ant love is to myn harte gon with one spere so kene,  
Nyht and day my blod het drynkes myn hart deth me tene.

Ich have lived al this yer, that I may love na more,  
Ich have siked moni syk, lemon, for thin ore,  
Me his love never the ner, and that me reweth sore;  
Suete lemon, thenck on me, ich have loved the zore.

Suete lemon, y preye the, of love one speche  
While y lyve in worlde so wyde other nulle y seche  
With thy love, my suete leof, mi blis thou mihtes eche,  
A suete cos of thy mouth mihte be my leche.<sup>6</sup>

Specimens might also be produced to show that there was no want of variety either in the metre or in the form of the stanza. But the above will suffice to give the reader an idea of the progress which, even at this early period of its literature, the art of versification was making in England. But it was not till a subsequent age that these glimmerings

<sup>4</sup> M. Paris, sub ann.

<sup>5</sup> MSS. Harl.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



of true poetic power increased into a steady and permanent light. Some of the larger poems of this era, which appear to have possessed a considerable share of popularity, are deficient both in spirit and design, and exhibit only the rude efforts of inexperienced rhymers. Little must have been known of the true nature of poetry when such productions could obtain general approbation; and we may accordingly conclude that the taste of the people had as yet received none of those strong impressions which at once determined its direction, and enabled it to judge intuitively of what is presented to its judgment.

It was before our poetic literature had reached this stage of its progress, that Layamon, a priest of Ernesley upon Severn, translated Wace's '*Brut d'Angleterre*'—which is a Norman-French version of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history—into English verse. We do not possess any materials for a biographical notice of this early writer; but regarding his translation as one of the earliest specimens of metre in the native language, we have used his name for the purpose of introducing a few remarks on the state of our poetical literature towards the close of the second period of English history. Mr Ellis supposes that Layamon finished his translation in 1180, and conceives our language to have been formed betwixt that period and 1216. The following is a specimen of Layamon's verses:—

And of alle than folke  
The wuneden ther on folde,  
Wes thisses landes folk  
Leodene hendest itald;  
And als wa the wimmen  
Wunliche on heowen.

That is, in English—"And of all the folk that dwelt on earth was this land's folk the handsomest (people told); and also the women handsome of hue." Mr Ellis regards the dialect of Layamon as pure Saxon. Mr Campbell's opinion seems more just, that it is truly neither Saxon nor English, but something intermediate betwixt the old and new languages,—"*something*," to use his own beautiful simile, "*like the new insect stirring its wings before it has shaken off the aurelia state.*"

There is good evidence that the following ballad must have been composed in the reign of Henry III., probably soon after the battle of Lewes, which was fought in 1264. It is entitled, '*Richard of Alemaigne*,' and seems to have been written by one of Leicester's adherents:—

"Sitteth alle stille, ant herkneth to me:  
The kyn[g] of Alemaigne, bi mi leauté,  
Thritti-thousent pound askede he  
For te make the pees in the countré,  
Ant so he dude more.  
Richard,  
Thah thou be ever trichard,  
Trichthen shalt thou never more.

Richard of Alemaigne, whil that he wes kyng,  
He spende al is tresour opo[n] swyvyng,

\* Essay on English Poetry, p. 33.

Haveth he nout of Walingford oferlyng,  
 Let him habbe, ase he brew, bale to dryng,  
     Maugre Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

The kyng of Alemaigne wend do ful wel,  
 He saisede the mulne for a castel,  
 With hare sharpe swerdes he grounde the stel,  
 He wende that the sayles were mangonel,  
     To helpe Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

The kyng of Alemaigne gederede ys host,  
 Makede him a castel of a mulne-post,  
 Wende with is pride, ant is muchele bost,  
 Brohte from Alemayne moni sori gost,  
     To store Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

By god, that is aboven ous, he dude mucho synne,  
 That lette passen over-see the erl of Warynne.  
 He hath robbed Engelond, the mores ant the fenne,  
 The gold ant the selver ant yboren henne,  
     For love of Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

Sire Simond de Mountfort hath suore bi ys chyn,  
 Hevede he nou here the erl of Waryn,  
 Shuld he never more come to is yn,  
 Ne with sheld, ne with spere, ne with other gyn,  
     To help Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

Sir Simond de Montfort hath suore by ys 'fot,'  
 Hevede he nou here sire Hue de Bigot,  
 Al he shulde grante here twelf-moneth scot,  
 Shulde he never more with his sot pot,  
     To helpe Wyndesore.  
 Richard, &c.

Be the luef, be the loht, sire Edward,  
 Thou shalt ride sporeles o thy lyard,  
 Al the ryhte way to Dover-ward,  
 Shalt thou nevermore breke foreward.  
     Ant that reweth sore,  
 Edward,  
 Thou duest ase a shreward,  
     Forsoke thyn emes lore.

## Alexander Hales.

DIED A. D. 1249.

ALEXANDER HALES was born in Gloucester at the beginning of the 13th century, and received his name from a monastery belonging to the Franciscan order, in which he received his education. While yet a youth he was sent to the university of Paris, where he applied himself to study with the most indefatigable industry. He soon distinguished himself by the extent and variety of his learning, but especially in those cherished pursuits of the age, scholastic theology and the canon law. No sooner had he taken his degree of doctor, than he became professor in these branches, and his profound erudition and uncommon acuteness soon gained him the title of the 'Irrefragable doctor.' Some of his pupils afterwards became as distinguished as their master, and even more so. Among them were the celebrated Duns Scotus and John Fedanza, better known by the name of Cardinal Bonaventura. In 1222, the irrefragable doctor consigned himself to the monastic life amongst the Franciscans at Paris. Here he passed the rest of his days employing his time in that most laborious trifling—the composition of various works of scholastic theology. The greater part of them have long since perished; many extant works, however, are ascribed to him, but the only one that critics regard as genuine is the 'Summa Unversia Theologia,' or Commentaries on the Four Books of Sentences. He entered upon this work by order of Pope Innocent IV. It was first printed at Nuremberg in 1482, fol.; then at Basil in 1502; at Venice, 1575—6; and at Cologne in 1622. It is needless to say there have been no later editions. This work displays, of course, much of that oracular dogmatism and ambitious speculation which distinguished all performances of a similar stamp and of the same age, together with much also of that metaphysical subtlety and acute reasoning from faulty premises which were no less characteristic of them. In vain, however, shall we in general look either for useful knowledge or sound argumentation. Alexander Hales was one of the great admirers and expositors of Aristotle, and together with his contemporaries Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, and Thomas Aquinas, gave the Aristotelian philosophy that pre-eminence which it enjoyed over all Europe, till Bacon, that great iconoclast, disputed its claims to the homage of mankind, and aimed the first deadly blow at the reputation of the scholastic philosophers and their master. Since that these laborious and learned writers have been rarely looked into; they lived only as the commentatators and expounders of Aristotle, or as the authors of works wholly constructed on his philosophy, and it was neither just nor probable that their fame should survive his. As a theologian, Alexander Hales, like his contemporaries, adopted that most pernicious custom of applying the Aristotelian philosophy, or rather the extravagant system which they wrought out of it, and of illustrating the sacred page by the flickering light of the lamp of the Stagirite. By this means every book of theology, not less than of philosophy, was soon crowded with verbal quibbles and metaphysical subtleties. The 'Commentaria in quatuor libros sententiarum,' published under the name of Hales at



Lyons in 1515, are ascribed by the best critics to another author. In addition to the works usually ascribed to him, it is supposed that many of his MSS. exist in the libraries of Milan, Oxford, and Lambeth. *Requiescant in pace!* Those who wish to know more of this 'irrefragable doctor,' may consult Dupin, Leland, and Cave.

## Matthew Paris.

DIED A. D. 1259.

ONE of the most faithful and best informed of the numerous English historians of the 13th century was Matthew Paris, an individual of whose personal history little is known. Fuller makes him a native of Cambridgeshire, but upon no better authority than the fact that there was an ancient family of his name in that county. The first circumstance of his life which we know with certainty is, that he assumed the habit in the abbey of St Albans in 1217. Here he continued to reside until the period of his death in 1259, having never obtained any higher office than that of historiographer to the brotherhood,<sup>1</sup> although he enjoyed the friendship and even familiarity of several crowned heads. By his own sovereign, Henry III., he was treated in a very kind and confidential manner, being often invited to his table and employed in different missions of importance. He even hints that the king condescended to lend him occasional assistance in the composition of his great work,<sup>2</sup> although our author was certainly no sycophant or flatterer of princes, but, on the contrary, appears to have frequently admonished his sovereign with great boldness of speech. Indeed, no historian of his age has recorded the follies and vices as well as the virtues of the great with a more unsparing hand; and even though a monk himself, he has depicted the insatiable avarice, the intolerable tyranny, the luxury and perfidy of the court of Rome in the strongest colours. To this perfect integrity and fearlessness of character, he added no small share of genius and learning. "He was," says Pit, "an elegant poet, an eloquent orator, an acute logician, a subtle philosopher, a solid divine, a celebrated historian, and, which crowned the whole, a man justly famous for the purity, the integrity, the innocence and simplicity of his manners."<sup>3</sup> Among the princes who honoured him with their confidence and correspondence was Haco, king of Norway, for whom he transacted some affairs of importance in London, and who having obtained a bull from Pope Innocent IV. authorizing him to adopt steps for the reformation of the manners of the ecclesiastics in his kingdom, fixed upon Paris as the best qualified person to aid him in the projected reformation. At Haco's invitation, our historian went to Norway in 1248, and spent about a year in that country in restoring monastic discipline to its primitive strictness and regularity.<sup>4</sup> During his residence in Norway, he acted as ambassador for Louis IX. of France, whose friendship he had won by his learning and integrity.

The theological works of Matthew Paris have perished, but his his-

<sup>1</sup> Tan. Biblioth. Brit. p. 573.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. Angl. p. 404.

<sup>3</sup> Prelat. Script. 367.

<sup>4</sup> M. Paris, 504.

torical labours have been more fortunate. The greatest and most valuable of these is his 'Historia Major,' which contains the history of England from the conquest to the 43d of Henry III. or 1259. In the early portion of this work, our historian stands much indebted to the labours of his predecessor in the office of historiographer to the abbey of St Albans, Roger de Wendover; and it was continued after his death to 1273 by his successor in the same office, William Rishanger. Of this work our author executed an abridgment under the title of 'Historia Minor,' which is still preserved in MS. The first part of Matthew of Westminster's 'Flowers of History,' extending from the creation of the world to the conquest of England, is said to have been little more than a transcript of an unpublished work of Matthew Paris. Our author likewise wrote the lives of the two Offas, kings of Mercia, and of the twenty-three first abbots of St Albans. His historical compositions have been several times printed, and will be always consulted with interest and profit by the student of early English history. They are, indeed, disfigured with many ridiculous legends, but such kind of credulity was the folly of the times rather than of the man. The best and most complete edition of his works was published at London in 1684. The first edition of the 'Historia Major' appeared in 1571.

## Roger Bacon.

BORN A. D. 1214.—DIED A. D. 1292.

THE celebrated Roger Bacon, a monk of the order of St Francis, was born at Ilchester in Somersetshire, in the year 1214.<sup>1</sup> He is, perhaps, entitled to be considered as at least equal to any man of his age; and when we say this, we do not forget that Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventura, and Alexander Hales, flourished in the same century. That Roger Bacon was their match in general learning and powers of reasoning, will be readily admitted, while it must be granted that he far surpassed all of them in the knowledge of nature. This extraordinary man certainly gave strong practical indications that he was acquainted with the true way of studying the physical sciences,—with the secret of the experimental philosophy; though undoubtedly deficient in his method, and with a very imperfect conception of those vast and comprehensive general principles, which his great namesake FRANCIS BACON—a singular coincidence—showed to be applicable to all the sciences, and to constitute the only way in which man can become the 'interpreter of nature.' Thus Bacon deserves to be considered one of the greatest of the many forerunners of that auspicious era, which was to usher in a revival both of literature and religion, and to witness the most splendid discoveries in all departments of science; he was one of the many prophets, who amidst imperfect revelations and beclouded knowledge, gave promise to the world of the 'better dispensation.' It was not until many such had appeared, flashing one after another through the night of ages, and successively penetrating the thick darkness with a brighter and steadier ray, that at length the 'day

<sup>1</sup> Hist. et Antiq. Oxon. p. 136.

slowly dawned,' and the 'day-star' of science arose. In extenuating the merit, then, of those great geniuses who, though possessed of splendid powers, shone so dimly during the middle ages, we must never forget to weigh carefully and impartially all the circumstances which oppressed their faculties and circumscribed their views. Roger Bacon might, for any thing we know, have been the Francis Bacon of a later age; a light that would only tremble like a star amidst the 'darkness of the middle ages,' might be effulgent as the sun under other circumstances. We shall find, therefore, that the fame of these men is to rest, not on their absolute knowledge, but on their attainments viewed in relation to their times; and if this rule of judgment be adopted, sure we are, that many a greater name in the annals of modern science—greater, simply because placed in more favourable circumstances—will stand eclipsed by the glory of Roger Bacon. The giant strength with which some of the men of the middle ages grappled with their difficulties, and partially upheaved the vast piles of prejudice and ignorance under which they lay buried, is not less worthy of our admiration than the alacrity with which their successors, relieved of all these encumberments, press on in the open path of science and knowledge. There is a gradual preparation,—there are successive steps by which, in analogy with all the schemes of providence, and the limited nature of the human faculties, the Divine Being brings about every great change in this world, political, moral, and philosophical; and it is not less pleasing to mark the progress of the species in knowledge and improvement, than to watch the developement of the faculties of the individual.

Of the early years of Roger Bacon little is known; he received his education in the university of Oxford, at that time highly celebrated,—we speak of course in relation to the general darkness of the age. It numbered amongst its scholars men of no mean attainments and of no little genius. Many of them were something better than acute dialecticians,—men, whose knowledge was not confined to the vain subtleties of the scholastic logic, or the still vainer subtleties of the scholastic theology. At this period classical literature began to be more generally studied than heretofore; and it is worthy of notice, that Oxford, which earliest encouraged these pursuits, still maintains her pre-eminence in them. Amongst his most kind and zealous patrons, Bacon ranked the celebrated Grosseteste. To his instructions and advice, to the general influence which he exerted on his young mind, Bacon was probably indebted for that eminently practical bent which was given to his genius, and which led him, if not to despise much of the learning of his days, at all events, to assign to it a very inferior rank. To this conclusion we are led by the fact that Bacon, in the honourable mention which he makes of his great patron and benefactor, characterizes and applauds him, as one of the few who could, at that time, distinguish between truly valuable knowledge, and that which, as frivolous and worthless, deserved not the name.<sup>2</sup> Another of Bacon's friends was Edmund Price, archbishop of Canterbury. This prelate resided much at Oxford, and there afforded our young scholar much kind assistance. He was also deeply indebted to William

<sup>2</sup> *Opus Maj.* p. 64.



Shirwood, and Richard Fishacre, the former chancellor of Lincoln, and celebrated for his mathematical attainments, the latter a distinguished lecturer in the sciences, not only at Oxford but at Paris, at that time the most ancient seats of learning and science in Europe. To the latter city most of our scholars repaired, after passing through the usual course in England, for the further prosecution of their studies, and Roger Bacon adopted the usual practice. While at Paris, he pursued various branches of learning and science with unremitting application. His reward was the degree of doctor of theology, and the character of one of the most profound and extraordinary scholars of his age. After this he took the monastic habit of the order of St Francis; but whether he did this while he yet tarried in France or after he returned to England, which was in 1240, cannot be determined.<sup>3</sup> On his return to England, Bacon took up his abode at Oxford. He here distinguished himself, as did also his brother, Robert Bacon, by a sermon preached before Henry III., in which he inveighed in very strong language against the excessive deference which that monarch paid to the opinion of Peter, bishop of Winchester, as well as against the practice—then so generally adopted—of giving the most important posts in the kingdom to foreigners. In this honest expression of an independent mind, he was a worthy imitator of his great patron, Grosseteste. But all Bacon's inclinations and habits led him away from public life, and he applied himself to study with a zeal as ardent as his perseverance was invincible. Discontented with the learning of the schools—a mark of uncommon penetration—he chiefly employed himself in the study of nature, in experimenting. The words in which he declares the inadequacy of Aristotle's writings to answer the purpose to which they were applied, are so remarkable, that we cannot refrain from quoting them. "*Si haberem potestatem super libros Aristotelis, ego facerem omnes cremari; quia non est nisi temporis amissio studere in illis, et causa erroris et multiplicatio ignorantie ultra id quod valeat explicari.*"

For more than twenty years did he devote himself with indefatigable industry to various branches of the physical sciences, during which period he expended on books, instruments, and experiments, not less than £2000—then, of course, a very large sum—which was principally contributed by his generous patrons and friends.<sup>4</sup> It has been a matter of some doubt whether he made these experiments at Oxford or Paris; the former opinion seems the more probable, as his work detailing these experiments is addressed to William of Paris, thus implying that it was composed elsewhere. In these pursuits, he made—as will be the case with every one—a progress proportioned to his genius and industry. His discoveries indeed may appear small beside the vast accumulations of modern science, but they will be justly considered wonderful by any man who reflects on the darkness of the age in which Bacon lived, and that his discoveries were all his own. In order to obtain an easy access to the sciences, he applied himself to a diligent study of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic. The consequence was, he was not only a match for any of his contemporaries in metaphysics and theology, but far surpassed them in grammar and the languages. In astronomy, as is well known, he gave a notable proof

<sup>1</sup> Oudin, Comment. de Script. Eccl. tom. III. p. 191.

of his skill by showing the errors which existed in the calendar, and pointing out with uncommon exactness the way to correct them. A copy of his corrected calendar is preserved in the Bodleian library. Of this discovery Dr Jebb says, "*Inter pulcherrima jure recensenda est quæ humana unquam excogitaverat industria.*"

This discovery we should consider chiefly valuable as connected with astronomy: not so, however, the men of that day. It helped Paul, bishop of Fossoni, to concoct his treatise on the right celebration of Easter, in which he disputes some of the statements of Bacon. It is a striking confirmation, however, of the extraordinary penetration of Bacon, that when the celebrated Copernicus, at the request of that bishop, took some more accurate observations with a view to the settlement of this question, he verified the disputed statements of our scholar. As a mechanician, Bacon was even still more renowned than as an astronomer. In his own works, he speaks of many extraordinary machines which he had made or seen; and still more extraordinary ones are attributed to him by the blind admiration of some, or—strange to say—the base envy of others, who magnified his power for the very purpose of fixing upon him the character of magician. That such nonsense should have been believed, however, is a conclusion that he must have possessed a very uncommon measure of ingenuity. Optics he greatly improved both in theory and the practice. This science was then in its infancy, and Bacon expended much both of time and money upon it. That he must have made considerable progress is evident from the fact, that he not only describes with much accuracy lenses both convex and concave, and the manner in which, by the refraction of the rays of light, they magnify or diminish objects, but he points out the application of spherical glasses to aid impaired eye-sight,—for viewing distant objects, whether terrestrial or celestial—whence he has been supposed, with considerable probability, to have been the inventor of the telescope,—and to the construction of the camera obscura and the burning glass. In geography, our author had exhibited the same indefatigable industry as in all the other branches of knowledge. He made himself thoroughly acquainted with all the discoveries of his age, and knew how to make use of them, as appears by some curious passages from his '*Opus Majus*,' preserved in Hakluyt's collection of voyages and travels.<sup>5</sup>

But it was in chemistry that Bacon's talents were most conspicuous; and it was here, too, that he betrayed some of those infirmities which, in those superstitious days, beset even the most exalted genius. The facts which he established, however, were numerous; and, in more than one instance, led to important results. It is well known that many of the most valuable discoveries were made while pursuing that visionary object, the philosopher's stone, or that brilliant illusion, the mode of transmuting inferior metals into gold. This splendid folly,—this scheme for creating an *El-dorado* at home,—was prosecuted by most of the chemists, or rather all chemists of the age, with a diligence, which, had it been bestowed on more rational objects, under the guidance of the inductive philosophy, must have led to the most illustrious discoveries. While pursuing this gilded shadow, however, the alchemists

<sup>5</sup> Vol. iii.

sometimes stumbled upon a truly 'golden' truth; just as the first adventurers to America sometimes hit upon the true path to wealth, by colonising that rich soil,—wealth, which they often sought in vain beneath its surface. It was in accordance with the same visionary spirit which showed itself so conspicuously in the sublime nonsense of the 'philosopher's stone,' that Roger Bacon speaks of the extraordinary virtues of the *aurum potable*, or tincture of gold, and of a mysterious charm which was to renew in old age the warmth and vigour of youth: "*illa medicina*," says he, "*quæ tollant omnes immunditias et corruptions vitioris metalli ut fierent argentum et aurum purissimum, æstimatur a sapientibus posse tollere corruptions corporis humani in tantum, ut vitam per multa secula prolongare*." When we find him thus credulous, it is not wonderful that many should have doubted whether he really possessed those great chemical secrets of which he often speaks in a language not a little bombastic, and with such an imposing air of mystery. We here refer more particularly to what he says of a certain unextinguishable fire, and of the marvellous powers of a substance which many supposed to be gunpowder. Yet, under this frequently inflated language and affectation of mystery, his language is often so plain as to convince us that he was really aware of the composition of gunpowder; while the 'unextinguishable fire' was, in all probability, a species of phosphorus. That the invention of gunpowder, commonly attributed to a German of a much later period, belongs to him is plain from the following passages in his works:—"In omnem distantiam, quam volumus, possumus artificialiter componere ignem comburentem ex sale petrae et aliis." At another time he still more plainly indicates the ingredients of this wonderful substance; half-disguising the secret, however, under the mystery of anagram. "*Sed tamen salis petrae luru mope can ubre et sulphuris: et sic facies tonitrum et coruscationem, si scies artificium*."<sup>6</sup> Here it will be observed that the letters which compose the name of the third ingredient are transposed, "*carbonum pulvere*." In another part of his writings, Bacon speaks of this discovery in that exaggerated and mysterious jargon which was so characteristic of the age in which he lived, and which, like all perversions of the simple truth, brought its own punishments along with it; for these high-sounding pretensions only exposed him to the imputation of magic power.

His knowledge of practical medicine was evidently very considerable for his age, though, of course, tinctured with the errors of his chemistry. These two departments of knowledge uniformly enlarge or contract together.

These brilliant talents, and this profound and universal knowledge, were not in those days harmless possessions. If, in an after age, just when philosophy had begun to break the trammels imposed on her by false notions of religion, Galileo was to be imprisoned, because God had not constructed the universe after the ideas of infallible ecclesiastics, we need not think that Roger Bacon, at a still darker period, was to make such progress in knowledge and yet go unscathed. In those days, much knowledge was a dangerous possession. He was soon—as above hinted—accused of magic, partly by those who, it is feared,

<sup>6</sup> Ep. de Secretis Operculis Artis et Naturæ, cap. xi.



urged the accusation more because they were envious of his fame than because they suspected his orthodoxy, and partly by those whose astounding ignorance qualified them for any exercise of credulity. This charge of magic appears to be groundless, inasmuch as he wrote treatises against both that and necromancy as unlawful arts. That he was superstitious, and that superstition often led him to empiricism, is only saying that he was born in the dark ages. That he believed in judicial astrology is also true, but then every body believed in it too. Nevertheless, the charge of magic, as usual, prevailed. The monks of his fraternity even went so far as to accuse him of holding converse with evil spirits, and no sooner did this rumour reach the ears of the pope, than he was forbidden to deliver lectures; then told that he must not mingle with society; and at last subjected to close imprisonment. It has been shrewdly conjectured that Bacon's intimacy with the obnoxious Grosse-teste, bishop of Lincoln, furnished an additional motive for this infamous persecution.

This malignant and cruel treatment had its usual effect—it recoiled on the persecutors. Bacon might, it is true, suffer in person, but instead of injuring his reputation his sufferings greatly enhanced it. About this time, the cardinal-bishop of Sabina, an intelligent and worthy man, who felt a great regard for Bacon, and knew enough of his writings to inspire him with the sincerest admiration of his genius, wrote to request a complete account of all his discoveries. With this request, as the heads of his order had forbidden him to communicate any of his works to the world, Bacon refused to comply. In a short time, however, the cardinal-bishop of Sabina became Pope Clement IV. Bacon then wrote to say that he was ready to comply with the wishes of the pontiff, rightly thinking that papal infallibility would protect him against his bigotted order. This was the foundation of his ‘*Opus Majus*,’ a sort of improved edition, a careful digest of all his former productions. He transmitted it to the pope by John of London, as some say, but more likely by John of Paris, his favourite pupil, whom he had diligently initiated into all his mysteries of knowledge and science. It was in reference to this pupil that Bacon made the striking observation, “How ridiculous to boast of the powers of the human mind when all the knowledge it has acquired by a life’s devotion to science, may be communicated to a youth in a few hours!” This work procured the patronage of Clement, who protected and encouraged the philosopher. But this interval of repose was of brief duration, Nicholas succeeded to the papal throne in 1278, and Jerom de Asculi, general of the order of St Francis, obtained his confirmation of a sentence which consigned our author to imprisonment, and prohibited the reading of his works. No cause has been assigned for this but vague and absurd suspicions of tampering with arts of necromancy and magic.

The profound attainments of Bacon gained him the title of ‘*Doctor Mirabilis*,’ or the ‘wonderful doctor;’ a title to which he undoubtedly had as fair a claim as Alexander Hales to that of the ‘*Irrefragable Doctor*,’ or Thomas Aquinas to that of the ‘*Angelical Doctor*.’ His works were exceedingly voluminous, and as various as his learning. Bayle tells us that more than eighty books were written by our friar, and that he had himself seen nearly one half. Dr Jebb mentions a still greater number, classifying them under the multifarious heads of

grammar, mathematics, physics, optics, geography, astronomy, chronology, chemistry, magic, medicine, logic, metaphysics, ethics, theology, philosophy, and miscellaneous. An ingenious, and by no means improbable conjecture has been hazarded, however, which would considerably diminish this prodigious number of volumes often ascribed to him. Different copies of the same treatise have often been circulated under different titles; and thus the titles of distinct chapters of the same work have not unfrequently passed for titles of distinct treatises. Not less than ten of these pieces are to be found in the single work, '*Epistola Fratris Rogeri Baconis de secretis operibus artis et naturæ et de nullitate magicæ.*' Published at Paris, 4to, 1542; 8vo. Basil. 1593; 8vo. Hamburgh, 1608, 1618. It is to be found in the '*Bibliotheca Chemica*' of Mangetus. It contains many valuable facts, with a complete exposure of the futility of necromancy, divinations, and magic.

It is singular that his *Opus Majus*, originally written in the form of an epistle to Pope Clement IV., and which is an abridgment and digest of all his other productions, was long unknown. It was not published till 1733, when Dr Jebb put forth a beautiful edition in folio, after a laborious collation of different MSS. In this work, in consistency with the author's views of the usefulness of knowledge, and the ardour with which it should be cultivated—topics on which he largely and frequently expatiates—he advises the pontiff whom he addresses to become the patron of literature and science. Bacon's chemical tracts, which are numerous, may be found in the *Thesaurus Chemicus*, 8vo. Frankfort, 1603, 1620. His treatise, entitled, '*On the means of avoiding the infirmities of old age,*' was first printed at Oxford in 1590. In this work he commends the use of those secret and mysterious medicines of which we have already spoken. This book was afterwards published with notes by Dr Richard Browne, under the quackish and imposing title of '*The cure of old age, and the preservation of youth.*' Several of Roger Bacon's tracts still remain in MS., and are likely to do so. Science, in these times, can gain nothing by their publication, while enough has appeared to establish the character of Bacon as one of the most extraordinary men of the age in which he lived. A treatise on Chronology, '*Computus Rogeri Baconis*;' a theological work, called '*Compendium Theologicum*,' and '*Liber Naturalium*,' are to be found in the king's library. Two other works under the name of '*Opus Minus*,' and '*Opus Tertium*,' are preserved in the Cotton library.

## Albricius.

THE most careful examination of the best sources of intelligence has thrown no light on the history of this eminent physician and philosopher. But he lived at a time when the fame he possessed was not to be acquired without great exertion and ability. It is not at periods when science is mingled with much error that reputation for skill is easily obtained, but in those in which it is not cultivated at all. And this was by no means the case in the age of Albricius. Leland says that he had only met with his name by accident, but that he lived in the reign of John and Henry III. Bale adds that he was born in London, and

educated at Cambridge and Oxford. It appears also that after finishing his studies in these universities, he went abroad, and acquired, in the course of his travels, a knowledge of medical science, philosophy, and literature in general, which rendered him celebrated on his return to England, as one of the greatest scholars of the time. The learning which he must have possessed in order to enjoy this reputation may in some degree be estimated from our knowledge of the fact, that the physicians of the 13th and 14th centuries were expected to be versed in all the abstrusest sciences of the Greeks and Arabians. From the time of the celebrated Avicenna, who flourished in the 10th century, not only alchemy, but every branch of natural philosophy, became the almost necessary adjunct of medical study. The very uncertainty that attended the science placed its professor under the obligation of seeking this universal knowledge. Astronomy was not less essential than alchemy; and it was a notion very common among physicians, that the human frame was a sort of microcosm, or abstract of the world. Such an idea of course, favoured the indulgence of the wildest theories; but every theory of the kind demanded a large share of learning, if not of sound philosophy for its support; and they who thought that every thing in heaven and earth had its likeness in man's body, would naturally imagine that all the laws and motions of nature were to be viewed in relation to his existence. In a rational state of science this opinion might perhaps tend highly to the advancement of medical knowledge, but when the chief part of the ancient philosophy was wild conjecture, it necessarily led to a mode of study as unprofitable as it was laborious. "This variable composition of man's body," says Bacon, "hath made it as an instrument easy to distemper, and therefore the poets did well to conjoin music and medicine in Apollo, because the office of medicine is but to tune the curious harp of man's body, and to reduce it to harmony. So then the subject being so variable, hath made the art by consequence more conjectural; and the art being conjectural, hath made so much the more place to be left for imposture." Petrarch wrote a severe critique on the physicians of his age, and Chaucer does not fail to let us see all the weak points of the profession as it was presented to his observation in England; but the satires and philippics of these distinguished men show but the extent of study, which a conscientious physician like Albricius would have to pursue, and, through how many obstacles he would have to pass before obtaining the solid fame which he appears to have enjoyed. Of his works Bale has enumerated only the following: 'De origine Deorum,' 'De ratione Veneni,' 'Virtutes Antiquorum,' and 'Canones Speculativi.' In the 'Mythographi Latini,' published at Amsterdam in 1681, there is a small treatise 'De Deorum imaginibus,' to which the name Albricius is attached, but it is doubtful whether this was not Albricius, bishop of Utrecht, in the 8th century.



HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO THIRD PERIOD,

EXTENDING

FROM EDWARD I. TO THE ACCESSION OF HENRY VII.

WITH

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICES

OF

**Eminent Englishmen**

WHO FLOURISHED DURING THAT PERIOD.



# HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

TO

## THIRD PERIOD.

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**Constitution of England not the result of occult causes—Origin of Magna Charta—**Its repeated ratifications an evidence of the state of public feeling—The elements of popular liberty at work during the reign of Edward I.—Their influence in the reigns of Edward II. and III.—Common law under Edward III.—Advance of popular independence under Richard II.—Reigns of Henry IV., Henry V., Edward IV.—State of political feeling at the accession of Henry VII.—History of literature during this period—General views of the origin of a national literature—First seeds of literature in England—Scarcity of books—State of literature in the reign of Edward I.—Early impulse given to the study of Jurisprudence—Roger Bacon's account of the state of learning—Establishment of the English universities—Schoolmen—Poets—Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng—Influence of the crusading spirit on English literature—State of literature under Edward III.—Oecam—Burley—Chaucer—Gower—John of Salisbury—Neekham—Joseph of Exeter—Wickliffe—Knyghton—Higden—William of Wykeham—Literature under Henry IV., Henry V.—Lydgate and Occleve—Chicheley—Waynflete—Minstrels more esteemed than Monks—Literature under Edward IV.—Origin of the Laureateship—Harding—Norton—Ripley—Fabyan—Invention of printing—Attention paid to classical literature—Schools—The Drama.

THE constitution of England was neither born in secret, nor nourished by invisible foster-mothers. If its rudiments lay scattered beneath the soil in a period of historical darkness, the earliest documents we possess indicate their existence. The metal was not run together by supernatural agency, but forged into a mass and into form by the bold sledge-hammers of known men. This has been the case from the first great act which secured liberty to our ancestors down to the present time. Deliberate resistance under conspicuous leaders,—legislative enactments the result of open counsels,—successes in war and commerce secured by the vigorous exertions of many keen and active minds,—these are causes to which the existence of our freedom may be traced through all its stages; and it is this opportunity which we possess of assigning its establishment and progress to the operation of certain causes, set at work by public men, which gives so deep an interest to our history, and so especial a value to our biography.



The security which was given to private property by Magna Charta,—the establishment of fixed courts of judicature,—and the increase of towns,—were the first results of that happy combination of valour and free wisdom which formed the earliest elements of the English character. That the great charter was the reward rather of foreseeing policy than of any sudden impulse,—that it sprung from the rooted principle of liberty, and not from the mere temporary suggestions of expediency,—is strongly evidenced by the care with which each succeeding generation struggled to confirm its enactments. No less than thirty-five times, it is stated, was this charter ratified at the instance of the nation;<sup>1</sup> and when it is considered that, in the pursuit of such solidly important objects, the community never acts without a guide,—that it is not kept together without the compacting power of many superior minds,—it will be easily seen how numerous a class of eminent men must have been formed in the active and popular walks of life, while our literature was quietly nourished by souls of a sedate and more tranquil nature.

The leaders of the parliament in the reigns of Edward I. and his two immediate successors, had a perilous and untried labour to perform. In the actions and characters of these men, as far as they can be at all known, the thoughtful reader can scarcely fail of taking a lively interest. They had to convince the sovereign that there was strength in the people when that strength was yet unexhibited; to establish maxims, which it required much light to render intelligible, but to support which they had only the simple expedient of attempting resistance. The first Edward's reign was one of memorable events for the monarchy: that of the second, and of the third, for the nation. Notwithstanding the reputation attending the successes of the last-mentioned monarch, the power of the people acquired new strength under his sceptre. We now hear of a king's being obliged not only to sacrifice his prime minister to the will of his people's representatives, but even to banish his mistress. This increase of authority in the people was not a naked or isolated good. While it tended to produce the most advantageous results, it was itself the result of many prosperous circumstances. The nation was in the healthy growing time of youth; its energies were continually multiplying; it seemed every year to see more clearly some branch of its interest or duty. A greater value was hence given both to industry and talent; jurisprudence had no longer a mere theory by which to try its maxims, but an actual state of things; and it may be learnt even from the very regulations which were passed to protect or promote trade—injudicious as the most of them were—that it was now plainly seen how greatly the strength of the country depended upon the labour of the commonalty.

Until the reign of Edward III., the civil and canon law appear to have preponderated in all the courts; but in this reign the practice of the common law courts was much improved by the introduction of a strict system of pleading. "Under the reign of Edward III.," says Sir Matthew Hale, "the law was improved to its greatest height. The judges and pleaders were very learned. The pleadings are more polish-

<sup>1</sup> "The charter was ratified four times by Richard III., twice by Edward I., fifteen times by Edward III., seven times by Richard II., six times by Henry IV., and once by Henry V."—*Lingard*.

ed than those in the time of Edward II., yet they have neither uncertainty, prolixity, nor obscurity. So that, at the latter part of this king's reign, the law seemed to be near its meridian."<sup>2</sup>

A terrible proof was given of the advance of popular independence, as opposed to the undefined exercise of royal prerogatives, in the reign of Richard II. It was terrible, because the struggle had the character about it of violence and injustice; and because it was chiefly forced on by the machinations of ambitious and discontented nobles, whose evil passions incited them to attempts which the gradual enlightenment of the nation at large would have rendered unnecessary, even in the cause of freedom. It is observed by Hume, that "the circumstances of this event, compared with those which attended the revolution in 1688, show the difference between a great and civilized nation, deliberately vindicating its established privileges, and a turbulent and barbarous aristocracy plunging headlong from the extremes of one faction into those of another." When, however, the different condition of the country at the two periods is considered, the wonder will be, not at the different manner in which the two revolutions were brought about, but at their similarly tranquil results.

The reign of Henry IV. was remarkable for its stern and even calmness. He acted in many respects like an absolute monarch, but secretly he yielded much to the popular cause. His conduct in reducing the power of the nobles was a master-piece of policy in respect to the throne, but it was a far greater benefit to the people than to himself. "His title being exclusively founded upon a revolution, he was compelled to adopt popular principles, and to magnify the parliamentary authority from which his own was derived. His most arbitrary measures were proposed under colour of a necessity, which prevented them from growing into precedents subversive of the constitution. The princes of his house, by patronising principles favourable to their own title, promoted the subsequent progress of liberty; although their measures of government, considered in their motives and in their immediate effects, are entitled to no more commendation than those of most other monarchs of their age."<sup>3</sup> Henry was not a popular monarch either in his disposition or his actions; and the good which the nation acquired in his reign was the fruit of its own energy, which had created a condition of things in which justice and freedom were no longer to be the gifts of the sovereign's magnanimity, but the staple commodity of the commonwealth.

In the military triumphs of Henry V. we trace the still enlarging power of the country, and the strengthening of its bulwarks by the patriotism of the people. The other events of his reign exhibit the mighty struggle which was going on between the barbarous principles of intolerance and arbitrary power, and those to which the nation was indebted for all its bright and cheering prospects. Religious light is too frequently the last good which a people rapidly pressing forward in the pursuit of wealth or liberty aim at obtaining. Religious truth, and the duties which pertain to its free diffusion, are consequently seldom established in their minds so soon as those which relate to their property as citizens. We ought not, therefore, to be greatly surprised,

<sup>2</sup> Hist. of the Common Law.

<sup>3</sup> Sir J. Mackintosh.

perhaps, that while a constant effort was made on the part of the people to increase their power, and limit the prerogatives of the crown, they willingly, for the most part, assented to the most horrible exercise of authority when the title of Lollard or heretic could be applied to the victim. But fearfully did the nation pay for this dark and slothful compliance with the enemies of toleration.

The reign of Henry VI., as indeed the whole period from Henry VI. to that of Richard III., was stormy and sanguinary. Insurrections and a civil war,—a fierce and ruinous struggle, which ended, not in the triumph of the people, but in the exaltation of a prince whose whole course was one of splendid vanity. “For the faithful and loving hearts,” said he, “and also the great labours that ye have borne and sustained towards me in the recovering of the said right and title which I now possess, I thank you with all my heart, and if I had any better good to reward you withal than my body, ye should have it, the which shall always be ready for your defence, never sparing nor letting for no jeopardy, praying you all of your hearty assistance and good countenance, as I shall be unto you very rightwise and loving liege lord.” But courteous as were these assurances, the nation received no benefit at his hands.

The reign of Edward IV., it is observed by Mr Hallam, “is the first during which no statute was passed for the redress of grievances, or maintenance of the subject’s liberty.” Unfortunately, the influence of his example, and the blind pleasure which men take in pomp and show, loosened the nerves of the nation. “Both lords and commons,” says Dr Lingard, “during his reign, instead of contending like their predecessors for the establishment of rights, and the abolition of grievances, made it their principal study to gratify the royal pleasure.” The consequences of this were soon felt. As the kingdom was now situated, the only firm security of legitimate authority lay in the freedom and improvement of the people. The overthrow of his family,—the usurpation of Richard III.,—and the disastrous contentions which had to be endured before tranquillity was restored,—were the almost inevitable result of such a reign as that of Edward the Fourth’s. Nor can we believe that the country would so soon have righted itself, had it not been for the possession of some remaining intelligence in the community, and an intrinsic fitness in the yet infant policy to establish its liberties on a firm basis.

The very first debate of the commons on the accession of Henry VII., furnishes some curious matter in illustration of the advancement which the public mind had, by that time, made in sound political feeling. There was a strong bias on the part of the lawyers to question every measure, even those which most intimately regarded the sovereign himself, till rule or precedent could be brought to justify it. On the other hand, there was enough of plain, practical wisdom, and a sufficient quick-sightedness on the side of the people to prevent their becoming the dupes of mere technical niceties and distinctions. When, therefore, it was found impossible to define the right by which Henry was to be considered the legal possessor of the crown, all classes very wisely indicated their consent in silence to forget the flaw in his title, that they might enjoy, with the better security, the peace and prosperity which his elevation brought them.



In pursuing the history of literature, the mind is continually disposed to question the truth of the statements which philosophers and critics have made as to the causes of its prosperity or decline. Like the plants most useful to mankind, it is found to flourish under a vast variety of circumstances; and in proportion to this its apparent hardihood, is the difficulty of determining with precision the principles by which it is acted upon from without. The most absolute monarchies as well as the freest republics have had their poets and their annalists: the most frugal and the most luxurious nations have shown themselves alike favourable to its growth: and, in a similar manner, taste and genius have been found wanting in the most prosperous as well as in declining states. The different principalities of Germany, and the republics of Italy, afford ample proof of this proposition on a small scale; and the literary history of nations presents a similar result, less obvious perhaps and striking, but not the less curious and convincing.

The difficulty, however, here alluded to, is less in the earlier than in the later periods of inquiry. This is equally the case with the literature of England, France and Italy. We are enabled through the common national records of these countries to trace their progress in intellectual refinement with satisfaction and accuracy, and, in many respects, assign a cause for their improvement up to the period when society assumed a new aspect, and the minds of men became subject to indirect influences sufficient in strength and number to outweigh or modify the more natural and obvious causes of advancement. In Italy, the cradle of modern literature, learning and the muses followed closely on the track of reviving order and liberty. The excitement which belongs to periods in which new commonwealths begin to feel conscious of their strength is almost in all cases favourable to the creation of a literature. Speculation is then awake,—thought has ample room for exertion,—truth has few enemies,—and hope is bold and vigorous. A strong, practical sense of poetry is thence generated. The people at large blend with their activity a desire of intelligence which renders them attentive to every one who can present a new idea or lead them to new experiments. Genius can, therefore, never lie dormant in such times. Every thing is in favour of its developement—there is nothing, when it comes forth, to daunt or lower it. The situation of the Italian republics in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was precisely that which fosters the human mind into confidence, and gives the highest possible value to knowledge. Before the end of the twelfth century, the states of Lombardy abounded in men whose profound acquaintance with civil law indicated an advancement in intellectual pursuits as extensive as it was rapid.<sup>1</sup> By the middle of the thirteenth century, poetry and the fine arts began to exhibit their powers; and the close of that period beheld the triumphs of a Cimabue, a Giotto, and a Dante.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after appeared Petrarch and Boccaccio, two men not more admirable as writers, than as scholars and patrons of learning. Taking advantage of the increasing intelligence of their countrymen, they employed their energy and various talents in strengthening the inclination for study which was every where apparent. They were joined in this laudable endeavour by others who venerated them for their genius: the

<sup>1</sup> Tiraboschi *Storia della letter. Ital.* t. v. lib. II. c. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Lanzi *Storia Pittorica.* t. i. p. 15.

classics began to be studied with care and enthusiasm: the arrival of learned Greeks from Constantinople was the signal for commencing the study of Homer and Plato: manuscripts were collected, professorships instituted, and in a few years, Italy could boast of a race of poets and scholars whose names would for ever remain venerable in the history of literature. France, in the mean time, was making considerable progress in similar studies; but the circumstances of the country were different, and it was chiefly to the university of Paris, and the concourse of distinguished men to that celebrated seat of learning, that she owed her importance in the literary world. Theology, with all the auxiliary studies of scholastic logic and metaphysics, formed the chief pursuit of the university; but these branches of learning were cultivated with a diligence which rendered the intellect of the patient scholar as acute as it was active, and when a disposition is felt to ridicule the subtleties of logic, it should be remembered, that in the age when it was most in fashion to employ that science, the acuteness which it gave was, in some measure at least, a safe-guard against the wild and vague reveries of superstition.

While France and Italy were thus rapidly advancing to a period of great intellectual refinement, England also reaped some advantage from the opening of those sources of instruction to which they were indebted for their improvement. Nor was its political condition altogether unfavourable to the progress of knowledge. William the Conqueror had introduced a race of men into the country who were accustomed to regard themselves as sovereigns of the lands which were given them as the wages of their valour. The laws which oppressed the conquered inhabitants abridged not the freedom of these Norman soldiers; and when the Saxon spirit revived and mingled itself with that which inspired the Norman knights and barons with their love of independence, a desire for, and a knowledge of liberty were produced, which had an important influence on the moral and intellectual as well as political state of the community. The grand contest of the barons with King John affords a plain indication of the firm and continued growth of this feeling; and when to this were added the advantages soon after derived from increasing wealth, from intercourse with foreign countries, from the establishment of distinguished scholars in many of the important posts of government, England was placed in a state well-calculated for the nourishment of the first seeds of literature. It was long, however, before the materials of learning were brought into this country, or obtained any general circulation. As late as the year 1299, we find a bishop of Winchester borrowing a bible of the cathedral-convent of St Swithin, and giving a bond, couched in the most formal terms, for its return. Warton observes, in speaking of the same period, that when a book was bequeathed to any one by will, it was seldom without several restrictions and stipulations: that if a person presented a book to a religious house, he offered it with great solemnity on the altar, and considered that the gift merited eternal salvation: that the most terrible anathemas were pronounced against those who should be guilty of taking a book presented to a religious house, and, as an instance of this, it is stated, that the prior and convent of Rochester declared, that they would every year pronounce the irrevocable sentence of damnation on him who should purloin or conceal a Latin translation of Aristotle's

physics, or even obliterate the title.<sup>3</sup> The manner in which the purchase of a book was made corresponded with the high idea thus entertained of its value. It was usual when such an article of property was to be disposed of, to collect several persons of the greatest respectability together as witnesses, and their names were recorded in the deed of purchase. The learned writer above named quotes two or three documents of this kind, and which bear a much later date than that above alluded to. Thus, in a manuscript of the book of the sentences of Peter Lombard, appears the following: "This book of the sentences belongs to Master Roger archdeacon of Lincoln, which he bought of Geoffrey the chaplain, brother of Henry vicar of Northelkington, in the presence of Master Robert de Lee, Master John of Lirling, Richard of Luda, clerk, Richard the almoner, the said Henry the vicar, and his clerk, and others: and the said archdeacon gave the said book to God and saint Oswald, and to Peter abbot of Barton, and the convent of Barden!" A still more striking instance of the value or scarcity of books occurs in the statutes of St Mary's college, Oxford, in which it is ordered "that no one should retain a book in the library, or cause it to be retained above an hour, or two hours at the most, lest others should be hindered from the sight, or study of the same."

This want of books was the most formidable obstacle with which the students of the 13th and 14th centuries had to strive; but the facts above stated lead to the important discovery that their value was beginning to be estimated aright, and that it was considered an object worthy of the most wealthy and the most powerful to collect them. Men of letters enjoyed the advantage of libraries much earlier on the continent than in England; there were greater facilities there for the collection of manuscripts both Greek and Latin, and the communication of knowledge was proportionately more rapid. We find, consequently, that but few native Englishmen had risen into notice, when Edward the First began his reign, and that literature, at that period, had not yet been able by its genial influence to tame the violent passions and prejudices of the age. His career, though one of military splendour, and productive of important political advantages to the country, did not tend to soften the feelings, or enlarge the views of the great body of his subjects. The wars with Wales and Scotland kept up the haughty spirit of the higher classes, and the fierce brutality of the lower. Education opposes the interest of monarchs intent on military aggrandisement, in as much as it renders the people too enlightened to be managed in mass; and thus both the policy of the king, and the agitations consequent on war, will almost invariably prevent the progress of general improvement in such reigns as that of Edward the First.

There was one feature, however, in the policy of that monarch which deserves particular mention, as it outweighed many of the circumstances most unfavourable to the literature of that period. It was the impulse then given to the study of the law. The importance of this science at the dawn of learning can scarcely be too highly estimated. Less capable of being misrepresented than the sublime truths of theology, but sufficiently grave and dignified in their purposes, the principles of legal study are admirably calculated to strengthen the mind, and lead to the forma-

<sup>3</sup> Dissertation on the Introduction of Learning into England.



tion of a habit of close and extensive observation. Tiraboschi remarks the great and beneficial influence which the early pursuit of this branch of learning had in Italy;<sup>4</sup> and Mr Stewart speaks still more decidedly to the same effect. "No study," says he, "could then have been presented to the curiosity of men, more happily adapted to improve their taste, to enlarge their views, or to invigorate their reasoning powers; and although, in the first instance, prosecuted merely as the subject of a weak and undistinguishing idolatry, it nevertheless conducted the student to the very confines of ethical as well as of political speculation; and served, in the mean time, as a substitute of no inconsiderable value for both these sciences. Accordingly we find, that, while in its immediate effects it powerfully contributed, wherever it struck its roots, by ameliorating and systematizing the administration of justice, to accelerate the progress of order and of civilization, it afterwards furnished, in the farther career of human advancement, the parent-stock on which were grafted the first rudiments of pure ethics, of liberal politics, taught in modern times."<sup>5</sup> The encouragement, therefore, which was given to legal studies in the reign of Edward the First, is the principal circumstance on which the literary historian will fix his eye; and the remark made by Sir Edward Coke, that it was not till this period that the English law assumed any appearance of regularity or strictness in its principles, will be regarded as worthy of no slight attention.

That, with the exception of this branch of learning, knowledge was pursued at this period but in the most superficial manner, we have the testimony of the notable Friar Bacon himself. In the account he gives of his studies to Pope Clement IV. when dedicating his '*Opus Majus*' to that pontiff, he says, that he had expended altogether forty years in the acquisition of knowledge, but that he would undertake to teach any man of diligence, moderate capacity, and willing mind, all the learning he possessed in the space of half-a-year. The mystery which appears on the face of such an assertion, he explains away by expressing his conviction, that he could teach his pupil enough Hebrew in three days to understand the Scriptures, and that it would not take a longer time to make him acquainted with Greek, so that he might comprehend whatever had been written in that language. With regard to the sciences, geometry he considers could be taught in a week, and arithmetic in no time at all. Of course these expressions are to be taken as those of a man humbled at the discovery which his own superior mind and experience had enabled him to make of the narrowness of the scope to which the science of the age was confined. The testimonies borne to his learning by many eminent scholars afford a proof that, whatever were the difficulties with which he had to contend, he had overcome them as far as they were to be subdued by human intellect. Bishop Jewel instances his work '*De Idiomate Linguarum*,' as a proof that he was able to judge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew tongues.<sup>6</sup> Dr Friend, in his history of physic,<sup>7</sup> not only says, that "he was the miracle of the age he lived in," but that he was "the greatest genius perhaps for mechanical knowledge which ever appeared in the world since the time of Archimedes." The same writer observes the little notice which is taken of this remarkable man by the historians of his time, and exclaims with just

<sup>4</sup> Storia, t. iii. lib. iv. c. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Dissertation i. c. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Defence of the Apology. Pt. iv. c. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Part ii. p. 235.

indignation that "so extraordinary a genius would surely have as well deserved to have had a place in their writings, as the detail of a blazing star, or a bloody shower, which they never fail to register at large; and that it might perhaps have been of as much use and pleasure to the reader, as a long recital of the rise and fall of a great minister, or the wars and victories of our kings."

The remarks of Bacon on the limited extent of his knowledge, taken in connection with the circumstance, that because of that which he possessed he was regarded as a magician by his countrymen, throws great light on the general state of learning in England at the period of which we are speaking. But it is not to be lost sight of, that Bacon received a great part of his education at Oxford; and that, though he resided and studied some time at Paris, it was in the retirement of the former university that he made most of the acquisitions which have bestowed such celebrity on his name. This circumstance forcibly shows how important an influence the establishment of the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had on the progress of both literature and science. The libraries they as yet possessed were very small, but they afforded an incomparably wider field for research than would have been opened to the student without their establishment. No private individual could have collected a sufficient number of books for carrying on the simplest branch of inquiry, and it would have been vain for him in those days, to seek a retirement sufficiently secure from vulgar intrusion to enable him to pursue his inquiries in tranquillity or safety. The Franciscans had, a few years before the accession of Edward, begun to distinguish themselves at Oxford; and an anecdote related of one of the superiors of their house there, will serve to show how great a conflict had yet to take place between scholasticism and natural or practical science. Going one day into the school where the celebrated Robert Grosseteste was then lecturing, he found the pupils rehearsing, as it was termed, their questions. To his surprise he heard that the subject of their exercise was Whether there is a God? "Alas, alas!" he exclaimed with unaffected disgust, "ignorant simplicity is daily gaining heaven, while these learned disputants are arguing about the existence of heaven's Master." Anxious, it is said, to prevent his pupils from so dangerous a waste of their time and ingenuity, he immediately sent to Rome, and obtained for them the best copies that could be procured of the *Decretals*.<sup>8</sup> To the diligence of the Franciscans is ascribed the large collection of manuscripts which was soon afterwards made to the great benefit of literature. Nor was Bacon the only Englishman of celebrity who belonged to this order. It numbered in its ranks Alexander Hales, the master of Duns Scotus, and of the learned Italian doctor and cardinal, Bonaventura, a man who is said to have been only second to Aquinas himself. Leland describes Hales as both a philosopher and a theologian of the highest worth, and states—which is important to our purpose—that his lectures were attended by a numerous auditory who regarded him as little less than a divinity.<sup>9</sup> This popularity of our accomplished and erudite scholar proves that there was already a class of persons in the kingdom who had sufficient inclination, as well as leisure, to devote themselves to literary pursuits, and that what was now chiefly wanting

<sup>8</sup> Berington's Lit. Hist. of Mid. Ages, p. 364. <sup>9</sup> *Commentarii de Script. Brit.* p. 233.

for the rapid advancement of the nation in intellectual refinement was peace, and the appearance of writers, who leaving the obscure paths of study should win philosophy to converse on themes of which every heart could comprehend the value.

The firm footing which Aristotle and the schoolmen still kept in all the great avenues to knowledge left this task in a great measure to the poets; but the writers of that class who appeared in the reign of Edward the First possessed few of those graces which were likely to secure popularity to their works. The most distinguished of them were Robert of Gloucester, and Robert Mannyng, or Robert de Brunne. Both these writers composed a metrical chronicle of England, commencing with the most fabulous period of its history. It is generally allowed that neither of these productions possesses much poetical merit, and that they afford but a discouraging specimen of the progress of the language. They contain, however, a plentiful store of traditionary tales, intermixed with some practical precepts of wisdom which could hardly fail of proving useful and acceptable in the age when they appeared. Still more closely allied with the affairs of life were the ballads produced at this period, in some of which there is a vein of satire which we should hardly have looked for at such a period. It is remarked by Warton, that the character of English poetry began to be changed about this time; that fictitious adventures were now substituted in the place of merely historical or traditionary incidents; and that the rude simplicity of the native English was gradually yielding to a more ornamental style of expression.<sup>10</sup>

In the reign of Edward the Second, the taste for poetical romance gained new strength, and forms the principal feature in the literary annals of the period. It had long been the custom with persons of rank and wealth to entertain minstrels in their houses; and the passion for the poetry of romance increased with the means for its gratification. The crusades had given birth to events well-adapted of themselves to the purposes of poetry, and had aided the importation of those new and gorgeous materials of verse which in no age could have failed to delight and captivate the imagination. There is also a circumstance which well-deserves to be considered, but which does not appear to have attracted the attention it deserves. Most of the wealthiest families in England could by this time boast of having had some member of their house celebrated in the histories of the day for his prowess in the fields of Syria. The just pride of some, the vanity of others, and the sympathy of all, would thus be strongly excited by every allusion to events in which their personal feelings could so easily find an interest. Romance thence became something more than the luxury of youthful minds, or the amusement of the gay and indolent. The minstrel who could invent with ingenuity a tale of chivalry, had it in his power to confer honour on the most exalted rank, and as the refinement of manners increased, the distinction bestowed by his art would become more and more esteemed. The reign of Edward the Second was ill-adapted for the advancement of learning, or any species of literature, but the seed of knowledge is not prevented from vegetat-

<sup>10</sup> Hist. vol. i. p. 111.



ing while it is yet in the ground, though the plants it afterwards produces may be blighted.

In the splendid reign of the succeeding monarch, both poetry and philosophy sprung rapidly forth. The works of Occam and of Burley,—the one honoured by his contemporaries with the title of the ‘invincible doctor,’ the other with that of the ‘perspicuous doctor,’—bear testimony to the keen appetite with which the studies of the schools were pursued, while the numerous metrical romances which bear the date of this period attest with equal force the advancing state of our poetry. The abolishment of the use of French in legal affairs which took place in this reign, had no doubt an important influence on the literature of the country. That language had been hitherto cultivated by the learned as only second to Latin for the purpose of communicating their ideas, and Grosseteste and other poets employed it in their most admired and popular compositions. Had the English been thus brought into use among the higher classes of the nation at an earlier period, it would not, it may be conjectured, have so rapidly acquired the strength and polish for which it was soon after distinguished. But the refinement of manners which took place in this reign, the elegance which characterized the amusements of Edward’s court, and the general diffusion of a taste for poetry by means of the new romances, rendered its cultivation when thus introduced a matter of necessity; and we consequently find that the language of the writers who lived but a short time previous to the present period, can bear no comparison either for force or harmony with that of the poets who now laid the foundations of our national literature. The names of Chaucer and Gower, with some of minor note, as those of Richard Hampole and Robert Longlande, afford ample proof of this commencement of a new era; and in the succeeding reign we see both poetry and every other branch of literature exercising a powerful influence on manners and opinions, the best and truest sign of the simultaneous progress of knowledge and civilization. Those branches of science, however, which bear most directly on the affairs of human life, were as yet but little cultivated or understood; and it is related that such was the ignorance of even the best instructed classes on the subject of geography, that when Lewis of Spain was made prince of the Fortunate Isles, or the Canaries, by Clement VI., the English ambassador at Rome, together with his retinue, thought that it must be England which the pope had given away, and hastened home with the terrible news. The historian couples this notable anecdote with the information given by Speed, that there were then thirty thousand students in the university of Oxford alone, and asking what was the occupation of all these young men? answers, “To learn very bad Latin, and still worse logic.”<sup>11</sup>

A somewhat exaggerated account is here given of the number of students, if we take that word to mean only such as actually frequented the university for the purposes of knowledge. But making allowance for those who were mere idlers in the place, a very striking proof is afforded by the above statement of the rapid progress which a taste for literature was making in the nation. With regard to their learning only very bad Latin and worse logic, it may be observed, that nothing

<sup>11</sup> Hume, vol. ii. p. 472.

could be taught in the universities but such branches of knowledge as the age possessed, and that such institutions are generally known not to be remarkable for anticipating the world in discoveries of practical importance. But that very bad Latin was taught may be fairly disputed. England had already produced some writers in that language whose compositions will bear the examination of severe criticism, and who employed it on subjects which required a fluency and grace of expression not to be obtained without a profound acquaintance with all its niceties. John of Salisbury, author of the *Policraticon*, Alexander Neckham, who wrote a poem on Divine Wisdom in seven books, and above all, Joseph of Exeter, whose musical and elegant verses are universally admired,<sup>12</sup> were examples in Latinity which could not be without their influence; and though the taste of the age led the greater number to study Statius and Ovid rather than Virgil, there is no doubt but that the Latin language was written by the scholars of the time with considerable taste as well as fluency.

It is not so easy, perhaps, to soften the historian's aspersion of the logical studies of the university; but happily for the interests of truth, those principles were about to manifest themselves which, by bringing every species of knowledge to the test of sound reason and historical testimony, assign to artificial rules of argument the precise place and value they ought to hold in the intellectual system. With the poets and philosophers who graced the reigns of Edward the Third, and of the unfortunate Richard the Second, appeared a man whose noble talents, and the part he performed in life, give him a right to the highest stand among the celebrated personages of the time. Wickliffe was profoundly learned,—he was not less acquainted with Aristotle than the most bigoted schoolmen, but he saw that logic could have nothing to do with the foundations of religious truth—as Bacon did in a subsequent age,—that it could never properly be made the vehicle by which to arrive at the knowledge of nature. So great was the esteem he acquired by the various and deep stores of erudition which he possessed, that his elevation to the professorship of divinity was effected in defiance of the whole body of the mendicants. This indicates not only the influence he must have himself enjoyed in the university, but the change which was gradually going on in the feelings and opinions of the nation at large. The mode of teaching which he pursued greatly contributed to accelerate this change, and while it tended to establish religion on its only proper basis, could scarcely fail of opening the most unwilling eyes to the hindrances which the other modes of scholastic instruction opposed to the spread of information. Above all things, his translation of the Scriptures acted as an engine of immeasurable force in dissipating the dense clouds of error against which human ingenuity must have ever proved unavailing. A love of reading, and even a disposition for inquiry, was thereby diffused among every class of the community; and the taste thus inspired, springing from the strongest feelings of the human heart, and being fed with the healthiest nourishment the understanding can receive, would be far more permanent than a similar principle implanted among the people by means of a different kind. The effects of his labours in this respect may be well understood from what

<sup>12</sup> Warton on the Introduction of Learning in England, p. 163.

is said of them by an adversary : " Christ," observes Knyghton, " committed the gospel to the clergy and doctors of the church that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and persons' wants ; but this Master John Wickliffe translated it out of Latin into English, and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the gospel-pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine ; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jests of both, and the jewel of the church is turned into the sport of the laity " The state of things here described presents a strange contrast to that which prevailed in the country a very few years before ; and the careful observation of this period of our national history will afford the inquirer light for a considerable portion of the path he has to explore, till he arrive at the greater era of change and reformation. In the earlier periods of English history or biography, that of which we are now speaking is, therefore, by far the most interesting. The preceding portion is sometimes wrapped in obscurity, and when it presents a clear surface for observation, the energies of the human mind are seen lying dormant under the grievous oppression of superstition, or wholly employed on some one object of immediate desire. In the portion which intervenes between the period we are upon and the reign of Henry the Eighth, we see but the development of principles now beginning to operate—the employment of agents of which the power was now for the first time discovered. Liberty, though still subject to violence, drew strength from the circulation of intelligence ; learning, as we have seen, though still having her home in the cloister and the schools, began to go abroad in the world ; and while much of the wealth of the higher ranks was expended in pleasure, a part of it was employed in the encouragement of architecture, and the other branches of the fine arts. Poets found a patron unknown to their predecessors. A public now existed, and Chaucer and his contemporaries were respected by the great as men who could find a brighter fame in the world than in princely halls. The cultivation of poetry thence became an occupation in which persons of wealth and independence might engage without becoming classed with the minstrel-flatterers whom they succeeded. Both Chaucer and Gower were engaged through life in the duties of an arduous profession, and their compositions abound in proofs that they found better materials for poetry in their intercourse with the world at large, than they could have collected in the courts of the greatest monarchs.

Among the prose writers of the period, Henry Knyghton and Ralph Higden devoted themselves to historical composition. But history requires a more advanced stage of society, of knowledge and philosophy, than poetry. It makes no sudden approaches towards perfection,—the wisdom it works on is accumulated rather than discovered, and England had yet to see several generations of eminent poets and philosophers succeed each other before the appearance of an historian of corresponding merit. Of the men who, in addition to their own labours, contributed by their patronage to advance the cause of improvement at this period, one deserves especial mention, William of Wykeham, who, by the foundation of the college at Winchester, and of New College, Oxford,



set a noble example to the wealthy churchmen of the country, and placed the importance of education as one of the gifts of rich benevolence in a proper point of view.

Not a single poet of any repute graced the reign of Henry the Fourth. The only writer deemed worthy of mention is Johannes Cusellanus; and his claim to notice rests wholly on a translation of the treatise of Boethius, 'De Consolatione Philosophiæ' into English verse. Henry, however, is stated not to have been without literary taste. He invited to England Christine de Pisan, distinguished as one of the most elegant memoir writers of France.<sup>13</sup> His conduct towards the young prince of Scotland, afterwards James I., is a still better instance of the respect he entertained for literature, and of the state of education in his reign. James having been taken prisoner in his passage from France, whither he had been sent by his father while very young, was kept a prisoner in England eighteen years; but during that time "he was so instructed and taught," says Hall, "by his school-masters and pedagogues appointed to him by the sole clemency of Henry IV., that he not only flourished in good learning and fresh literature, but also excelled in all points of martial feats, musical instruments, poetical art, and liberal sciences, insomuch, that at his return from captivity, he furnished his realm with both good learning and civil policy, which before was barbarous, savage, rude, and without all good nurture."<sup>14</sup>

The son and successor of Henry IV. was a far more decided patron of letters than that monarch himself. Having been educated at Oxford under the care of his uncle, Cardinal Beaufort, he was versed in the principal sciences of the age, and had acquired a respect for learning and ability which rendered him an intelligent as well as willing protector of men of genius. Both Lydgate and Occleve acknowledge him as their patron. The former in his prologue to the translation of the History of Troye, declares, that it was only at the command of the king that he would venture on the work, but that the monarch insisted upon his attempting it:

Because that he had joye and deutyte  
To reade in bokes of old antiquyte.<sup>15</sup>

Nor is it but of the most magnificent patrons that poets are in the custom of writing in such a style as that in which he speaks of the king's likeness to his father:—

He eldest son is of the noble king,  
Henry the Fourth of knighthood well and sprung.  
In whom is shewed of what stock he grew,  
The rootis vertus can thus the set renew:  
In every parte the tarage is the same,  
Like his father of manners and of name.

Occleve addresses him in terms still more flattering:—

Hye and noble prynce excellent!  
My lord, the prince! O my lord gracious!

<sup>13</sup> Turner's Hist. of England during Mid. Ages, vol. ii. p. 360.

<sup>14</sup> Warre of Troye, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. note.

I, humble servaunt, and obedient  
 Unto your estate, hye and glorious,  
 Of which I am full tendir and full jelous,  
 Me recomende unto your worthynesse,  
 With hert entier, and spirite of mekenesse.

The historian, Walsingham, accuses Oecleve of heresy, but Pits observes,<sup>16</sup> that he would not decide on the single testimony of that writer, and gives him the unmixed praise of having been one of the first of our poets who imitated Chaucer in polishing the English language. If Walsingham's supposition, indeed, was correct, we should have a curious instance of the complacency of the literary men of those days; but when it is considered, even that Oecleve was the known friend and scholar of Chaucer, we can scarcely suppress a feeling of surprise at the manner in which he commends the king's conduct towards the unfortunate man at the burning of whom the monarch was present:—

My lord the prynce, God him save and blesse,  
 Was at his dedily castigation.  
 And of his soule had grete tendirnesse;  
 Thurstyng sore his salvacion.  
 Grete was his piteous lamentacion,  
 When this renegade would not blynne  
 Of the stynking errour that he was ynne.

But, notwithstanding the favour which Henry the Fourth and his distinguished successor displayed towards the poets, learning is reported to have rather declined than advanced during their reigns, of which signs could be discovered at an earlier date. Wood assigns as one of the chief reasons for this circumstance, the power which the popes exercised in the English church. Let it not be presumed, he observes, that we were without some apology. When the Roman bishops conferred our benefices and our ecclesiastical dignities on strangers, while even our most learned men spent their days without profit, or were compelled to skulk under the monkish cowl, what inducement was there to pursue studies in themselves not possessed of any charm?<sup>17</sup> But this could scarcely be considered the cause of the decline in literature, at the period of which we are speaking. Henry the Fifth paid particular attention to ecclesiastical affairs, and though blind to the doctrinal errors of Rome, was not of a character to allow any interference on the part of the pope with the management of the national church. The archbishopric of Canterbury was no sooner vacant, than he promoted to that see the celebrated Henry Chicheley, to whose boldness and vigour the English church was in a great measure indebted for the preservation of its liberties. Both he and Waynflete, bishop of Winchester, followed the example of Wykeham, and founded colleges.<sup>18</sup> But the interests of literature were not to be secured by these means alone. Henry the Fifth, in his ambition to acquire renown as a conqueror, lost sight of the virtues which better became the king as well as the man. With all his accomplishments and his supposed respect for learning, he was not less the slave of bigotry than the most uneducated of his subjects. In his reign the Lollards were made to feel the utmost fury of their enemies,

<sup>16</sup> De Illus. Ang. Scriptoribus, p. 587.

<sup>17</sup> History of Oxford, 1306, &c.

<sup>18</sup> Berington Lit. Hist. p. 503, 504.

and truth and justice were taught the bitter lesson, that they might plead in vain if they came to the bar with religion.

In such a state of things, learning and philosophy could not but retrograde. They may far better advance when opposed by error than has been undisturbedly gathering strength for centuries, than when met by prejudices which have been shaken, but are re-asserting their authority. From the period of which we are now speaking, down to that of the Reformation, truth had to struggle perpetually against the worst enemies both of moral and intellectual good. The love of chivalry had given a seeming sanctification to war, and the polish which society derived from its precepts of gallantry, legitimized the most odious vices. It was from the lips of licentious soldiers that youth were to learn the rules of life,—from courtly women they were to derive their knowledge of religion. The aid of the scholar and the churchman was not required till his education was complete, and he waited to have his sword laid on the altar. It was only in the pomp and ceremony of the institution that religion had any thing to do with chivalry; but the church was satisfied with the part it was allowed to take in the management of the order, and for the zeal which the knight professed in the defence of its rights, it consented to believe that the cross he bore on his shield was a true emblem of his heart and conduct. Catholicism, thus indulgent to the false but glittering system which exercised so powerful an influence over manners, inspired the schoolmen with a more determined love of Aristotle and his logic,—continually forged new chains to keep down the rising spirit of inquiry,—taught the people to regard Roger Bacon as a magician, Wickliffe as a pest to society, and all who presumed to doubt the infallibility of the pope, as the ministers of Satan.

To these causes may be ascribed the slow progress which literature made during two or three reigns after that of Edward the Third, compared with its state at that period. In the reign of Henry the Sixth, Lydgate, still the principal poet of the age, was chiefly engaged in translating from the French, or in versifying traditions to gratify the vanity of monks. What portion of classical learning he possessed, was mixed up with the wildest fables of romance, and the principal Greek writers are named by him almost in the same manner as the old heroes of chivalry. There was, however, no indifference on the part of the people to the improvement of minstrelsy, and Warton adduces evidence to prove that the minstrels of this age were not unfrequently better paid than the clergy. In the year 1430, at the feast of the fraternity of the 'Holie Crosse,' at Abingdon, in Berkshire, twelve priests are stated to have received only fourpence each for singing a dirge, while the twelve minstrels who took a part in the amusements, were paid two shillings and fourpence each, besides being provided with refreshment for themselves and horses. Another case of a similar kind which occurred eleven years after, is adduced to show the same remarkable fact. Eight priests who were hired from Coventry to assist at a ceremony in the church at Mantoke, were paid but two shillings each, while the six minstrels engaged on the same occasion, received each of them double that sum, and were allowed to sup with the sub-prior of the monastery in the painted chamber, which was lit up by the chamberlain with eight large wax tapers. The want of respect for ecclesiastics which this would seem to imply, is the more difficult to be explained when the



character of the age is considered. There was no indifference to the rites of the church on the part of the people, nor was there a deficiency of talent, considered without reference to their errors and prejudices, in the ruling members of the establishment. Some names occur in the history of the period which deserve a respectable place among English ecclesiastical writers. Such are those of Thomas Waldensis, of whom it is said, that his works were the repository whence subsequent controversialists drew many of their most favourite arguments;<sup>19</sup> Walsingham the historian, Henry Chicheley, Waynflete, and others, who both by their ability and the energy with which they defended what was then the most popular side of the controversy, ought, it would seem, to have secured better patronage for their brethren. Had the inferior payment above mentioned been confined to the monks or priests engaged at ceremonies, we might have accounted for the circumstance by supposing that the ecclesiastics thus employed were usually the least learned members of the church; but we find that the same low rate of payment extended to preachers of some rank and learning. The prior of the monastery at Mantoke—who gave, as we have seen, four shillings to the minstrels who sung at his festival—paid a *doctor predicans* but sixpence for a sermon. The inference to be drawn from all this is, that the popular mind was yet in its infancy; that it had not yet begun to take any deep interest in subjects which require reflection; and that changes and improvements had to be looked for which should alter the state of the great mass of the people, before literature could be expected to advance with equal and steady steps.

The reign of Edward the Fourth commenced amid the confusion of civil war; and the jealousy of the monarch, combined with the tumultuary spirit which pervaded the nation, produced a state of things ill calculated to promote the cause of learning and general intelligence. How little freedom of speech the people enjoyed may in some measure be understood from an anecdote related of the king's conduct soon after he ascended the throne. A London shopkeeper to whose house was affixed the sign of the crown, laughingly said that his son should be heir to the crown. Strange to relate, Edward on being informed of the expression, directed that the unfortunate man should be apprehended, and soon after signed the order for his execution.<sup>20</sup> The prosperity, however, which attended the close of his reign was favourable to the improvement of the nation, and circumstances are on record which indicate an increasing respect for literature on the part of the higher ranks. Though the institution of the office of poet-laureate has contributed little to the improvement of the national muse, it served to mark, at the time when it was introduced, a higher degree of veneration for the poetical art than had existed in previous reigns. We have observed the respectability which literature appeared to be on the eve of acquiring in the times of Chaucer and Gower: since then minstrelsy seems to have been oftener heard of than any of the more genuine species of poetry; and it is a favourable sign of Edward the Fourth's regard for literature that we hear in his reign for the first time of a laureate poet. The custom of crowning successful bards had been early observed by the Provençals, and it had travelled from them into Germany and Italy. In some of

<sup>19</sup> Pits. de Illust. Ang. Script. Leland. Com. de Script. Brit.

<sup>20</sup> Hume, vol. III. Ed. IV.

the places where it was adopted with greatest zeal, it appears to have been amalgamated with the mass of figurative rites and ceremonies, which rose out of the same state of feeling as those of chivalry and many of the catholic churches. In Italy, Petrarch had introduced it from a sentiment in which veneration for his art, self-love, and patriotism, had all a part. But wherever it prevailed, it invested the poet with a species of dignity which greatly enhanced the value of his calling, and placed him not only on a level with the scholars who figured in universities and academies, but with the men who boasted of their titles derived from courts and princes.<sup>21</sup> Warton regards the appellation as it appears attached to the name of the king of England's poet, simply in the light of an academical distinction, and adduces numerous instances in which persons who took degrees in grammar at Oxford, were styled *Poetæ laureati*.<sup>22</sup> It is, however, singular that no poet should have been mentioned before this time as king's laureate; and whether we consider the title as given by the monarch, or as enjoyed by this court-poet as his proper academical distinction, it is evident that it was a title of honour which had not been usually borne by persons occupying the office of royal bard.

Of the state of literature, the productions of the period give but a very unfavourable opinion. Harding's Chronicle, which stands foremost in the list, is characterised as "beneath criticism, and as fit only for the attention of an antiquary." But Harding was a man of some rank, had both experience and influence, and employed poetry, however little genius he possessed, on themes of interest and importance. A similar indication is given of the common employment of poetry on subjects of practical utility, by two other writers of the age; and it may be remarked, that one of the first and surest signs of growing intelligence, is the approach of one species of literature and one branch of science to another. Norton and Ripley, who were two of the most distinguished chemists of the day, both wrote poems on the mysteries of their art; and the rank which they held as scholars throws light on the state of natural philosophy at the time when they flourished. The learned Ashmole, who published their poems out of zeal for 'Hermetique science,' observes, that Norton is allowed to have been the greatest alchemist of the age, but that indecent and abusive censures have been passed by his biographers on the study in which he was skilled. "Indeed, every one," remarks the indignant editor, "that is educated a scholar, is not born to affect or be happy in every art; some love one, some another, but few all."<sup>23</sup> Norton himself thus speaks of his science, and it will be seen how strongly the theological spirit imbued what were considered in those days the highest branches of philosophy:

" Maistryefull, merveylous, and archmastrye,  
Is the tincture of holi alkimy;  
A wonderfull science, secrete philosophie,  
A singular grace and gift of th' Almightye;  
Which never was founde by labour of man,  
But it by teaching, or revelation begaun.  
It was never for mony sold ne bought,  
By any man which for it hath sought :

<sup>21</sup> Selden on Titles of Honour.

<sup>22</sup> Hist. vol. II. p. 441.

<sup>23</sup> Theatrum Chemicum, Notes, p. 437.

But given by an able man by grace,  
 Wrought with greate cost, with long laysir and space.  
 It helpeth a man when he hath neede;  
 It voydeth vain glory, hope, and also dreade;  
 It voydeth ambitiousnesse, extortion and excesse;  
 It fenceth adversity that she doe not oppresse.  
 He that thereof hath his full intent,  
 Forsaketh extremities, with measure is content."

After replying to some of the objections to the art which, even in that day, it appears were current among the people, he says:—

" Therefore noe man shoulde be too swifte,  
 To cast away our Lord's blessed gift:  
 Consideringe how that Almighty God  
 From great doctours hath this science forbod,  
 And graunted it to few men of his mercy,  
 Such as be faithful trew and lowly.  
 And as there be but planets seaven  
 Among the multitude of stars in Heaven,  
 So among millions of millions of mankinde  
 Scarslie seaven men maie this science finde.  
 Wherefore Lay-men ye may lere and see  
 How many Doctors of great authoritie,  
 With many searchers hath this science sought,  
 Yet all their labours have turned into nought;  
 If thei did cost, yet found thei none availe,  
 For of their purpose every tyme thei faile;  
 And in despair thei reason and departe,  
 And then thei said how there is noe such arte;  
 But fained fables thei name it where thei goe,  
 A fals fond thing thei say it is alsoe:  
 Such men presume too much upon their minde,  
 They weene their witts sufficient this arte to finde."

In the account he gives of the distinction between a true and a false alchemist, he lays down the following rules:—

" Now ye that will this science pursue,  
 Learne ye to know fals men from trew.  
 All trew searchers of this science of alkimy,  
 Must be full learned in their first Philosophie:  
 Else all their laboure shall them let and grieve,  
 As he that fetcheth water in a sive;  
 The trew men search and seeke all alone  
 In hope to finde our delectable stone,  
 And for that thei would that no man shulde have losse,  
 They prove and seeke all at their own coste;  
 Soe their own purses they will not spare,  
 They make their coffers thereby full bare,  
 With greate patience thei doe procede,  
 Trusting only in God to be their speede."

The other work to which we have alluded is similarly indicative of the character of a large class of learned men, who, about this time, struggled hard to advance the sciences, but expended their efforts in a wrong direction. Ripley's book is entitled, 'The Compound of Alchymie: a most excellent, learned, and worthy worke, written by Sir George Ripley, Chanon of Bridlington, in Yorkeshire, containing twelve Gates.' It is dedicated to King Edward the Fourth, whom the

" Norton's Ordinall, p. 1—17.



author addresses in an epistle of great courtesy, and abounding in the praises of alchemy. His caution to the monarch respecting secrecy is a curious specimen of his style:—

“ For like it you to trust that trewlie I have found  
The perfect waye of most secrete alchimy,  
Which I wyll never trewly for merke ne for pounde  
Make common but to you, and that conditionally  
That to your selfe ye shall keep it full secretly,  
And only it use as may be to God's pleasure,  
Els in tyme comming, of God I should abyde  
For my discovering of his secrete treasure.

Therefore advise you well wyth good delyberation;  
For of this secrete shall know none other creature  
But onely you,—as I make faithfull protestation,  
For all the tyme that I here in lyfe endure:  
Whereto I wyll your Lordship me to ensure,  
To my desyre in thys by othe to agree,  
Least I should to me the wrath of God procure;  
For my revealing his greate gift and previtie.”<sup>25</sup>

The language of the poem throughout is that of the chemists and other natural philosophers of the age, and affords a valuable index to the state of science at the time when it was written. In the ‘*Liber Patris Sapientiae*’ which follows, instructions are given in a phraseology which shows how little refinement had as yet been introduced into the language of even cultivated minds. Of the zeal with which, to their ruin, the adepts in alchemy pursued their object, some idea may be formed from this portion of his advice:—

“ If thou put out mony for any other thing,  
It is to thy losse; and to thy great hindring:  
Except yt be for thy workers naturall foode,  
Which is had out of stone, ayre and wood.”

The short reign of Edward the Fifth, and that of the usurper Richard, put a stop for a while to what few advantages literature and science had received from court patronage. No writer of eminence graced this period of fear and trouble, and the historian and biographer have to record the actions of those only who expended their ability and energy in opposing a domestic tyrant. A taste for versification had become pretty generally diffused, and there appears to have been no want of poets of an inferior class; but they were the successors of the popular minstrels of a former age, and as they had the refuse only of legendary lore on which to work, they owed their temporary reputation to the charm which simple rhyme possesses among an uneducated people. There were, however, some few writers who occupied a station in society which would have prevented their seeking fame as authors, had not the nation been becoming every day more intelligent, and more capable of appreciating the worth of intellectual culture. William of Nassyngton, who translated a work on the Trinity into English verse, was a proctor in the ecclesiastical court at York; the sister of Lord Berners, who was prioress of the nunnery of Sopewell, composed a work in English, on hawking, hunting, and armoury, or

<sup>25</sup> *Theatrum Chemicum*, p. 110.

heraldry; and what is still more worthy of observation, Robert Fabyan, who wrote a *Chronicle*, or *Concordance of Histories*, and some other works, was a London tradesman, who had served the offices of sheriff and alderman.

But this writer ought rather, perhaps, to be placed under the reign of Henry the Seventh, when the kingdom began to recover from the effects of the ruinous disorders to which it had been subjected, and knowledge received those important additions to its means of advancement which have ever since prevented it from retrograding. That education of a liberal order had become common among the middle ranks of society, is evident from the case of Fabyan himself, who, though a tradesman, was reputed for his classical acquirements. The numerous authorities, also, whom he quotes in his '*Concordance of Histories*,' affords a proof that, by this time, the stores of general information were rapidly increasing, and becoming more and more familiar to the nation. It has been judiciously remarked, moreover, that though he was not altogether free from superstition, he was no great favourer of monastic institutions, or the legends they upheld. Thus, in speaking of the holy oil at Rheims, he says, "To this report every man may give credence as hym lyketh. For I fandē not this wryten in the Gospell, nor yet in no booke of Holy Scripture;"<sup>56</sup> an observation the more remarkable, as Fabyan does not appear to have ever associated himself with the Lollards.

It is plain from these circumstances, that the people of England were not unprepared to avail themselves of the new opportunities of improvement which were about to be afforded them. The invention of printing took place at a time when it seemed wanting to determine the vacillating energies of the nation to pursue the track of truth and science. Had it occurred during the destructive disturbances of war and civil tumult which engaged the minds of men in the cares of self-protection, the scholars of the day would probably have heard of it with unprofitable curiosity; the few calls of the public for literary works would not have been sufficient to show the value of the discovery, and the professional student would have been obliged to remain contented with his manuscripts. Had printing not been known till a later period, the increasing stream of thought and intelligence, wanting fitting channels through which to discharge itself, would have run to waste, and been lost on the surface of mere temporary topics, while the growing appetite for knowledge would have been daily tampered with by a few hardy speculatists, and would have only led by its keenness to the most absurd and dangerous expectations.

The employment of printing in this country was preceded by the rise of a very general taste for the classics. A notion had long prevailed among the few distinguished men who doubted the perfection of the old system, that the grammatical and critical study of the best ancient authors, would be more favourable to the mind, than its total confinement to the subtleties of logic. Jesus college at Cambridge was founded by Alcock, bishop of Ely, with an especial view to this object. Warton observes, that it is probable "that the academical pupils in grammar, with which the art of rhetoric was commonly

<sup>56</sup> The New Chron. of England and France, edit. by Ellis.

joined, instead of studying the real models of style, were chiefly trained in systematic manuals of these sciences, filled with unprofitable definitions, and unnecessary distinctions; and that, in learning the arts of elegance, they acquired the barbarous improprieties of diction which those arts were intended to remove and reform."<sup>27</sup> It is also well known that, when Dean Colet founded Saint Paul's school, such was the prejudice entertained by some of the heads of the church against the study of the classics, that a bishop declared that the place deserved to be styled a house of pagan idolatry. But both the bad taste, and the prejudices which had so long prevailed, gradually vanished as the communication with foreign countries for literary purposes became more frequent; as greater facilities were afforded for the perusal of the ancient writers, and the nation obtained sufficient repose to indulge in the pursuits of peace. The study of Greek was commenced in Oxford at the instigation of two of the most distinguished scholars of the period, Grocyn and Linacer. They were, however, violently opposed in their endeavours to impart to England the means of improvement which had already begun to operate so beneficially in Italy and France. For a long time the university was divided into two parties; those who favoured the new study taking to themselves the name of Grecians,—and its opponents as naturally assuming the appellation of Trojans. But too many circumstances operated on the side of the more erudite party to allow of its being exposed to a defeat, and besides the advantages it enjoyed from the better state of the nation, it derived no slight assistance from the character of the monarch himself. Bacon has beautifully as well as forcibly delineated the peculiarities of Henry's disposition. "He was," says he, "a prince, sad, serious, and full of thoughts and secret observations, and full of notes and memorials of his own hand, especially touching persons,—as whom to employ, whom to reward, whom to inquire of, whom to beware of, what were the dependencies, what were the factions, and the like,—keeping, as it were, a journal of his thoughts."<sup>28</sup> Of his pursuits, he remarks, that he was 'more studious than learned;' and, of his natural ability, that 'the sight of his mind was like some sights of eyes, rather strong at hand, than to carry afar off.'<sup>29</sup> Under a sovereign of this character men of learning and ability, especially if those qualities appeared conjoined with prudence, were more likely to find their talents duly appreciated than under one of a less cautious disposition. His acquirements, however, were sufficient to inspire him with a respect for letters; while the prosperity and calm which distinguished the latter years of his reign, left him at leisure to observe and examine the best methods of promoting both commerce and the arts. By his politic treatment of the nobles, the middle classes rose into wealth and consideration; and, though some of his regulations were founded perhaps on contracted views of government, and his love of accumulation induced him to encourage his ministers in an unworthy system of speculation, the nation found itself at the conclusion of his reign, surrounded with better prospects, and possessed of more numerous means of acquiring opulence, and securing its privileges than it had ever before enjoyed. The progress of improvement corresponded to these auspicious circumstances. More than one

<sup>27</sup> Hist. Sa. xvii. vol. ii.

<sup>28</sup> Hist. of Henry VII., Works, vol. v. p. 190.

<sup>29</sup> Id. 191.



species of popular amusement exhibited signs of advancing intelligence. The drama, though still in swathing clothes, and devoted to religious shows, began to be attended to with some care and taste. Grammar-schools were erected in almost every quarter of the kingdom; and a community was now in existence capable of foreseeing the advantages which would result to the next generation from such institutions. A great change, in fact, was on the eve of taking place, and the country seemed to feel conscious of its approach. A new order of things was about to call forth the whole strength of the national spirit, and it seemed to be already gathering together and preparing its forces for the better enjoyment of truth and liberty.

## I. POLITICAL SERIES.

### Edward II.

BORN A. D. 1238.—DIED A. D. 1307.

It is impossible to enter on the details and discussions connected with the biography, whether personal or political, of this distinguished monarch, without a conviction that we are treading new ground. Circumstances had occurred during the troubled reign of his father, which gave a determination to the course of events, not thereafter to be controlled, however it might be resisted or modified, by the ablest or most powerful rulers. The regency—ingenious, indeed, but still liable to the inherent infirmities of an imperfect authority—of Pembroke; the popular measures of de Montfort; and the fluctuating temper of Henry, had given to the people—*plebs*, as contradistinguished from *populus*—a feeling, with which it was perilous to trifle, of their weight and importance in all political calculations, and in every estimate of the national strength: nor was it among the least remarkable circumstances of the time, that the individual who was, in virtue of his rank, called to take the lead in this novel and critical state of things, was also eminently gifted in all the qualities necessary for the maintenance of his authority and influence amid doubtful claims and dangerous responsibilities. His personal advantages were not less conspicuous than his mental endowments. His commanding stature, sinewy frame, majestic countenance, and active movements, fitted him for the chieftainship of a spirited nation, warlike in its habits, conscious of its strength, tenacious of its rights, and struggling resolutely against the depressing and enthralling domination of prejudice and prerogative. Irascible and fierce in his resentments, he was yet singularly placable, and although firm of purpose, he gave way with the pliability of a seasoned politician to urgent and immediate considerations. Never were the ‘uses of adversity’ more happily exemplified than in his instance: young as he was when first compelled to engage in the strifes of war and policy, he proved himself equal to the emergency, nor was he less the affectionate son than the enlightened and energetic prince. He was the stay of his father’s throne; the sharer of his captivity; and he ulti-

mately rescued him from his enemies, and established his authority on a firm foundation.

His early youth appears to have been of a vicious and turbulent character. He associated himself with riotous and lawless companions, and there are statements in the contemporary historians, which represent him as permitting, if not encouraging, in the retainers of his court, the most violent and licentious courses. From this cloud, however, he speedily broke forth, and held his after-journey along a brighter path. He was an accomplished knight, skilful and intrepid in the tourney; and when, on one remarkable occasion, at a tilting-match in foreign parts, it was sought to effect his defeat by fraud and force combined, his dexterity and coolness gave him signal victory. A powerful opponent finding it in vain to assail him with the lance or the sword, seized him at unawares in a strenuous grasp, and sought thus to bring him to the ground. Edward, whose length of limb gave him immoveable firmness in his seat, sat like a rock, and giving his horse the spur, forced his antagonist from the saddle, and easily shook him to the earth. He was little more than eighteen when he entered, under most difficult circumstances, on the practical part of government, nor was it possible to blend more of wisdom and dignity than was exhibited by him in a situation that might have made a veteran statesman doubtful of his course. When the 'mad parliament' had, by the provisions of Oxford, reduced the crown to a mere dependence on the aristocracy, the signature of the prince was insisted on as an essential particular of the contract between the king and the malcontent barons. Edward, young as he was, surrounded by dangers and left to his personal resources, hesitated long, and only yielded at last to the conviction that no alternative was left. Yet, when afterward he was urged to break through a compact imposed by force, and accepted from sheer necessity, and rendered null by the violence and bad faith of the other contracting party, he refused, although circumstances encouraged the attempt to avail himself of the occasion; nor did he draw the sword until events had rendered inevitable the appeal to arms. His military character was famed betimes. In his first battle, he missed the crisis of victory, by yielding to his impetuous courage; but, in the conduct of his second fight, he extorted the admiration of the most consummate commander of the age.

Some time before his father's death, Edward had, in the language of one of our annalists, 'undertaken the crusado;' and a sufficiently interesting romance might be manufactured out of the apocryphal details which have been blended with his real adventures. The truth may be stated in brief space. He landed with 1000 soldiers at St John d'Acre, augmented his army to 7000 men; repelled the Saracens who assailed him on his march, and made himself master of Nazareth. With a small band of active warriors, he succeeded in surprising a large assemblage of natives in the celebration of one of their great festivals. The rout was complete, and the plunder immense; but the unresisted slaughter was savage and degrading: non-combatants were not spared,—men, women, and children, were unrelentingly butchered. Finding all efforts against him in the field unavailing, the dagger of the assassin was employed, but the activity and strength of the prince saved him from death; and to this simple statement has been added an affecting but

altogether poetical incident: his wife, Eleanora of Castile, is said to have applied her mouth to the wound, and to have drawn forth the poison with which the weapon had been anointed. That the poniard was envenomed is probable; and it appears certain that gangrene—the effect either of the unguent or of the climate—ensued; but as truth and gallantry are not always in alliance, for the lady's lips we must read the surgeon's knife, and, though it be not so set down, perhaps the actual cautery, in those days of rough chirurgery, was frequently applied to wounds. A truce with the soldan left Edward at liberty to return home, but his progress through the intervening countries was rather a continual ovation than a journey; and though he received at Sicily the intelligence of his father's death, it was nearly two years after that announcement, ere he entered his capital in pomp and glory, amid the acclamations of his people.

The passionate and vindictive qualities of Edward's temper were not permitted to interfere with his general policy, however their violent outbreak in the hour of success might tarnish the counsels or the actions of which they were the sequence. His intellect was vigorous and forecasting, calculating all the probabilities, and providing against all casualties. His great political scheme, from the very outset, seems to have comprehended the complete subjugation of Great Britain; the reduction of the independent kingdoms of Scotland and Wales under his own sovereignty. And so much of power and subtlety did he employ, with such overpowering force and fierce determination did he make his inroad, that in one instance he succeeded, and in the other his exertions ceased only with his death: in both cases, whatever of success he might achieve, was in great part due to those internal dissensions and treacheries with which both countries were vexed, and which he maintained and promoted with most unscrupulous policy. While only prince, he had led an English army over the Severn; but now, when vested with regal power, he addressed himself to permanent conquest. The first campaign, aided by all the formalities of bell, book, and candle, and sanctioned by act of parliament, terminated in a hollow and transient truce. A second invasion, conducted on sound principles of strategy, placed the English army in the rear of Llewellyn's defences: that brave monarch fell in a reconnoissance, and the mountain-fastnesses of his people were stormed and destroyed. In a calmer period, and under a more liberal system, it awakens surprise and anger, that the valour of a patriotic king, dying in defence of his country, could not secure his remains from insult: his head, encircled with a mock diadem, was set upon a spike for the edification of the men of London.<sup>1</sup> The hurdle and the gallows were his brother's fate. Cambria was annexed to England, and placed under English institutions; nor was it the least felicitous of political devices, that assigned a Welsh fortress as the birthplace of an expected son, and invested the young Cambro-Briton with the title of the Prince of Wales. It would be unjust to the memory of Edward, stained as it is with savage and revengeful perpetrations, not to add, that the imputed massacre of the Welsh bards rests on no adequate authority.

Scotland was a higher prize, and its conquest a harder game. The

<sup>1</sup> Heming, I. 13.—Dunst. 475.



Cwmri, notwithstanding the excellence of their bards, were little better than savages; and their half-armed militia, without leaders, were hunted down and dissipated after the deaths of David and Llewelyn. But the men of the North met the Southron on equal terms. Less refined, probably, because less commercial, there was no inferiority in aught that related to the science of government and the custom of political association. The Scottish horse was inferior both in number and equipment to the baronial chivalry of the south; but, though overwhelmed by 'England's arrow-flight,' while the battle was at a distance, the heavier weapons of the northern infantry seem to have had the advantage when the fight was hand to hand. Want of mutual confidence and co-operation was the bane of Scotland in the hour of her depression; but there never lacked leaders, brave and skilful, even to her failing cause. Wallace, Douglas, Randolph, the Bruces, were among the most accomplished officers of their day, and they might have dictated their own terms as the price of their submission; yet, though danger and a bloody death on the scaffold or the field menaced the holy insurrection, they put all to hazard for the independence of their country, and, after a long and doubtful struggle, effected their noble purpose. Edward's first measures for the union of the two countries had been wise and honourable. He negotiated a marriage between his son and the heiress of Scotland, and the treaty had been concluded on terms satisfactory to both nations, when the whole scheme was rendered vain by the death of the princess. Edward, however, was not content to have his favourite object thus defeated, and he pressed steadily and unscrupulously forward to its attainment. The power of England was not only physically and economically greater than that of Scotland, but her strength was concentrated under the command of an able and politic monarch, while the energies of the latter were exhausted in domestic broils, and misapplied by dishonest counsels. At least a dozen claimants were clamouring for the crown, and in evil hour Edward was made the referee,—a measure which might have been the result of mere timidity, but which has marvellously the aspect of treacherous compact. It forms no part of our plan—assuredly it was none of Edward's—to settle the question of personal right, in the controversy of Bruce and Baliol; it is quite enough to observe, that when the sovereignty was awarded to the latter, the king of England exhibited a much more accurate knowledge of individual character, than disinterested regard for the well-being of the nation which had chosen him as umpire.<sup>2</sup> He availed himself of the occasion to set up the most extravagant claims, and a large concession of feudal rights gave him a solemn investiture as seezerain of Caledonia.<sup>3</sup> The parchment king took the oath of fealty, and kept it so long as there was no temptation to break it: but in 1295, an opportunity offering of alliance with France, he listened to bolder counsels, and forwarded to England a formal renunciation of his fealty. Edward received the document with stern contempt. "Does the senseless traitor play the fool after this fashion? If he come not to us, we will go to him." His general, the earl Warrene, gained the decisive battle of Dunbar; Baliol surrendered, and military possession was taken of

<sup>2</sup> Heming, I. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Rym. II. 512—580.

the northern kingdom. In the meantime, the war with France was ill conducted by the English leaders, and Edward himself landed in Flanders, but the farther prosecution of hostilities was terminated by a truce, and the Scots were left to their own resources. This state of things would, probably, have remained for some time undisturbed, but for the rigour and rapacity of the men to whom the management of the king's affairs in Scotland had been committed. It was attempted to oppress as a conquered nation, a brave and high-spirited people, and that selfish and dastardly policy met with its just reward. A man—one of that class which never finds a congenial field of action, but in the agony of nations—stood boldly forward in vindication of his injured country. Opposed or imperfectly aided by a jealous nobility, William Wallace was constrained to rely on his own exertions, and on such help as might be obtained by his own popularity and by the sanctity of his cause. Strong both in mental and bodily frame, he was equal to all emergencies; and if his actions were not always under the direction of a mild and regulated morality,—if he were sometimes sanguinary and vindictive,—his excuse, so far as it may be permitted to extenuate, is to be found in the circumstances of his country and the temper of his times. His exploits, on a smaller scale, were romantic and almost uniformly successful; by his skillful dispositions, and the strange infatuation of the enemy, he gained a great victory at Stirling; and when irretrievably defeated at Falkirk, it was from no defect in his plans or dispositions,—they were perfect, but treachery betrayed his movements and crippled his manœuvres. Yet, though Edward in person commanded against him, not even the presence and personal exertions of that great master in the art of war, could prevent him from effecting a soldierly retreat. This was in 1298; seven years afterward, Wallace, who had never ceased to harass the enemies of his nation, was betrayed to his pursuers. His death was by the hangman's hand, with all the bloody circumstance of a traitor's condemnation; and the treachery of the false friend who guided his captors, with the mean and barbarous revenge which doomed the patriot to a felon's fate, have consigned to infamy the names of Monteith and King Edward.<sup>4</sup> Still Scotland, though crushed, was not subdued; the unconquerable spirit of freedom kept alive a dubious and exhausting conflict; and the remainder of Edward's reign was wasted in the ineffectual struggle. A greater than Wallace took the field, and the royal Bruce commenced that series of bold and well-conducted efforts which gave, in the event, independence to his country, and a crown to himself. The treachery of Comyn,—its home charge upon the traitor by Bruce,—the fierce and insulting denial,—Bruce's hasty dagger,—and the 'Mak sicker' of Kirkpatrick, were the turning point of a course of history scarcely rivalled in romantic interest and glorious achievement.

This exhibition of the character of Edward's principal antagonists was necessary for the thorough illustration of his own. Those remarkable individuals tasked the utmost efforts of his power, and but for their opposition it is impossible to guess how widely his ambition might have ranged; he was not, however, a man to dissipate his strength by multiplying his objects, and he addressed himself with intense and undivided

<sup>4</sup> West. 151 — Stow. 409 — Fordun, Bece, Buchanan, Blind Harry, *passim*.

purpose to the conquest of Scotland. All the 'pomp, pride, and circumstance' of chivalry were displayed in the preparations, and at length he poured on the Scottish frontier the full tide of war. No effective opposition could be anticipated, since the small army of Bruce had been ruined by the fatal result of an attempted *camisade* at Perth. But a mightier hand arrested the invader on his path. His health had long been failing, and on the 6th of July 1307, in the 69th year of his age, and the 35th of his reign,<sup>5</sup> he died at Burgh on the Sands, "in sight," says Lord Hailes, "of that country which he had devoted to destruction."

Edward's reign was, notwithstanding the pecuniary exactions consequent on an almost unceasing state of war, on the whole, beneficial to England. His fiscal necessities constrained him to important political concessions; reluctantly, however, and with an ill grace, did he make them, nor were they confirmed until after the persevering employment of every possible method of evasion. In truth, his character admitted the smallest possible portion of the magnanimous. Without fear, and without weakness, he was also destitute of those relents of our common nature, without which resolution becomes obstinacy, and justice degenerates into brutal revenge. He has been called, by a strange confusion of cause and effect, the English Justinian, and it is admitted that during his reign great improvements were made in both the system and the administration of law. The ecclesiastical courts were shorn of their injurious privileges, and abridged of their usurpations; the secular tribunals were reformed, and their distinct jurisdiction ascertained by specific definition. The courts of assize were regulated; the police of the realm was made more efficient; justices of the peace were made permanent; entails were secured; the practice of sub-infeudation was done away; the abuses of mortmain were restrained. Yet of all these salutary enactments, but a slender proportion is due to the sagacity or patriotism of the monarch. They were the work of parliament, with the king they were considered as mere ways and means. Edward was the huckster of reform, and rated his concessions to his people at the value of gold: he had a tariff of constitutional amendments, and each of them was duly and securely taxed. He haggled with his parliament, tried all methods of raising his price, and tasked his ingenuity to get the highest charge for the smallest possible abatement of prerogative.

With all his faults, however, Edward was a splendid prince. If he were not like the Alfreds and the Charlemagnes, an outrunner of his age, he was at least one of its brightest ornaments. He had no taste for the mere trappings of royalty,—his crown was worn on his coronation day, and then laid aside,—his dress was simple, and his habits of life temperate. His munificence was kingly, and he was steady in his attachments. His domestic conduct was exemplary: son, husband, father—in all these relations he was worthy of the highest admiration. He persecuted the Jews, it is true, but in that day it was esteemed a virtue to heap insults and exactions on that doomed race; yet Edward was no bigot, and the expulsion from a commercial country, of an entire caste of active merchants and extensive capitalists, was a measure of which the impolicy did not altogether escape the shrewd and observant even of that ill-informed period.

<sup>5</sup> Rym. ii. 1059.



## Edward II.

BORN A. D. 1284.—DIED A. D. 1327.

IF the brilliant reign of the first Edward have tempted us somewhat beyond our assigned limits, we may conveniently allow ourselves to trim the balance by a more cursory review of the inglorious rule of his degenerate son. His was the reign of favourites; to them and to his caprice he sacrificed his tranquillity, his kingdom, and his life. As heir-apparent he had, by his excesses, repeatedly provoked the reprobation of his father. His companion, from a very early age, had been Piers de Gaveston, the son of a knight of Gascony, and with this youth he ran a wild and profligate course, until the king, shortly before his death, banished the injurious associate, under oath from his son never to recall him.<sup>1</sup> The oath was kept so long as violation was impossible, but its obligation was forgotten or rejected when he assumed the crown. Gaveston returned, and with him came revelry, splendour, waste, poverty, exaction, remonstrance and rebellion. Few kings have ascended the throne under circumstances more promising. Prepossessing in exterior, vigorous and active in frame, and, it should seem, with enough of intellectual quickness to have carried him through the easy task of royal representation with dignity and grace, the waywardness of his temper, and the perverse obstinacy of his self-will, neutralized all these advantages, involved him in perpetual storms, and at last left him hopelessly stranded. Never was any human being so utterly reckless of appearances and consequences in the childish determination to have his own way. In the indulgence of his capricious preferences he outraged the law, insulted his nobles, alienated his queen, and oppressed his people. His first step was prophetic: the recall of Gaveston gave true indication of his character, and he never either contradicted or retrieved the folly of that weak and unseasonable act. He lavished on his rapacious favourite, honours and treasure; dismissed or imprisoned his father's faithful ministers, and suspended the invasion of Scotland for which a formidable and expensive armament had been prepared. Nor did Gaveston bear his faculties meekly. At the coronation he assumed the place of honour and precedence; shamed wealth and nobility in his dress and personal attendance; contemned the petition of the barons for his immediate exile; and having, by his address in the tournament, unhorsed several noblemen of the highest rank, in his pride and petulance laughed them to scorn. His enemies, however, were too powerful, and his banishment was decreed; yet even this overwhelming opposition did the infatuated Edward strive to evade by appointing him to the viceroyalty of Ireland.

Edward's accession was in 1307; early in the following year he married Isabel of France, one of the loveliest women of her time; and the exercise of a slender portion of common sense and rectitude of principle might have made him happy and respected. All, however, was in vain; his pride and petulance were not to be controlled, and every thing was put to the risk for that one wretched bauble on which he had set his

<sup>1</sup> Rym. ii. 1043.

heart. Partly by cajolery, partly by violence, Gaveston, after a brief absence, was brought back, but neither had learned wisdom:—the miserable game of haughtiness and outrage, concession and resumption was played over again, until affairs became desperate. The barons armed, and, after appointing a council of peers, under the name of Ordainers, for the redress of grievances, Gaveston concealed himself, re-appeared, was forced into banishment, returned, until at length exasperation reached its height,—war was levied against the king and his minion, and the latter perished in the strife. He appears to have been by no means destitute of eminent qualities, and a discreet conduct and courteous demeanour might have enabled him to maintain his position; but he was vain and unprincipled, it was impossible to trust him, and he fell the victim of his own incurable folly. Edward was outrageous in his grief and anger; he resisted strenuously the demands for an amnesty; but the barons were in arms, and he was compelled to yield. Gaveston was beheaded in June 1312; in October, pardons general and particular, were issued under the sign-manual.

In the meantime Bruce had been availing himself to the utmost of the opportunities given him by these injurious dissensions. By a series of gallant and well-managed enterprises, he gained possession of the principal fortresses of his kingdom, and pressed so closely the siege of Stirling, that the governor agreed to surrender if not relieved before the feast of John the Baptist. On the eve of that festival the army of Edward appeared in sight, and, on the 24th of June 1314, was fought the decisive battle of Bannockburn, an illustrious instance of the superiority of intellect over force. The advantage of numbers was greatly on the side of Edward; but the Scots were under the direction of the ablest officers of the age. Bruce commanded, and he was seconded by Randolph and Douglas. Nothing could be finer than the position and arrangement of the Scottish army, and throughout the battle not an error seems to have been committed: the defensive system was maintained until its utmost effect had been produced,—the stratagems of war were skillfully and seasonably employed,—and at the critical moment a bold offensive movement completed the success. On the other side nothing could be more miserably handled than the English army on that day: there was no presiding genius,—the subordinate commanders were rash, and the attack was made without support or simultaneousness,—no provision had been made for retreat, and all was dispersion and utter rout. Edward displayed courage in the fight, but his escape was difficult, and tried to the utmost the speed of his horse. The gain of this great battle encouraged the Scots to make strenuous efforts for the conquest of Ireland, but they were unsuccessful, and the death in battle near Dundalk, in October 1318, of the gallant Edward Bruce, left the English in undisputed possession.

During three years after the battle of Bannockburn, famine and pestilence afflicted England, and that unhappy country seemed to be given up to an accumulation of miseries. The king and his most powerful nobles were at variance; desire of revenge filled his breast, and distrust of his intentions prompted their movements, while the Scots, taking advantage of these dissensions, pushed their inroads to the Humber and the Tyne; they took Berwick, and an attempt by Edward to retake it failed. In the meantime the king, untaught by experience, was renew-

ing his former fault, and attaching himself to a new favourite, who, in his turn, renewed the errors of Gaveston, and distinguished himself by his haughtiness and rapacity. Hugh le Despenser—anglicised to Spenser—was the name of the individual who now became, *ex officio*, an object of hatred to the barons. They rose in arms, proscribed the Spensers, father and son, insulted the queen, and opened a correspondence with the Scots. This time Edward was successful, and he gratified his revengeful disposition by the execution of his most obnoxious adversaries.

This victory over domestic insurrection was followed by a truce with Scotland, and it might have been hoped that an interval of quiet might have allowed the country a breathing-space from its disasters. But Edward was the lord of misrule, and his administration was doomed to misfortune. The king of France invaded Guienne; conspiracies were frequent and alarming; and the escape of Lord Mortimer from the tower of London set loose the most formidable of the conspirators. Calamity was now hastening on, and the credulity of Edward lent it speed. He suffered himself to be deluded into a fatal snare, devised, it is probable, by Mortimer, who had found an asylum with the king of France, Charles IV., brother of Edward's queen. It was the first object of this subtle man to obtain possession of the prince-royal, and for that purpose he intrigued successfully. Isabel left England for her brother's court, where she became the mistress of Mortimer, and they, soon after, on a specious pretence, persuaded Edward to send over the young prince. Measures were now taken for an invasion of England, and, in September 1326, Mortimer and the queen landed in Suffolk with an armed force. The king was friendless; his capital rejected him, and he fled to Wales. His enemies pursued him without respite: the elder Spenser surrendered at Bristol, and died the bloody death assigned to traitors; his son soon after underwent the same fate. The tragedy was now hastening to its conclusion: the crown was declared forfeited, and Edward of Carnarvon was nominally succeeded by Edward of Windsor, while the real power was exercised by Mortimer and Isabel.<sup>2</sup> But one step more remained, and this strange complication of folly, fraud, and violence was completed in September 1327, by the murder of the king. His character has been already sufficiently illustrated, and we need not swell our pages by further exposition. There is, however, one event which occurred in his reign, which, though but slightly connected with his personal character, it were improper to pass without mentioning:—The order of the Knights Templars, established in 1118, originally poor, had become powerful and immensely rich. Their wealth was, probably, their crime; the pope and the king of France, Philip the Fair, seized upon their persons and dissolved the order: they were persecuted unrelentingly, and many of them suffered a cruel death. In England they were more leniently treated; they were not injured in person, but their property was transferred to the Knight-Hospitallers.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Ford. i. 650.

<sup>3</sup> Stat. at large, x. App. 23.



## Thomas, Earl of Lancaster.

DIED A. D. 1322.

AMONG Edward's English nobles, the most powerful was Thomas, the grandson of Henry III., who united in his single person the five earldoms of Lancaster, Lincoln, Leicester, Salisbury, and Derby. He was the eldest son of Edmond, surnamed Crouchback, the favourite son of Henry III. Edward had received from his father a large portion of the forfeited estates of the rebellious barons, and many other magnificent donations: he had also obtained valuable grants from his brother, Edward I., and his mother, Eleanor. Two successive marriages, first with Aveline, sole heiress of the earl of Albemarle, who, dying without issue, bequeathed to him the whole of her vast possessions, and next with Blanche of Artois, daughter of Henry Lacy, earl of Lincoln, had vastly augmented Edmond's already extensive possessions, and this accumulation of wealth and power was turned against the crown by his descendants. The confederate barons, while concerting measures for the overthrow of the hated Gaveston, placed themselves under the leadership of Thomas Plantagenet, Edmond's eldest son, now the first prince of the blood, and by far the most potent nobleman in the kingdom. He headed the armed barons who presented themselves in the parliament at Westminster, and extorted from their intimidated sovereign an order for the immediate banishment of the man whom he most delighted to honour. Upon Gaveston's return to England, he raised and led on the army, which, for a time, set the royal power at defiance, and wielded the destinies of the kingdom; and when that unfortunate minion was doomed to expiate his manifold offences against the haughty nobility of England on the scaffold, the spot selected for his execution was fixed within the jurisdiction of the earl of Lancaster, who alone, of all the conspirators, dared to brave the highest resentment and indignation of his sovereign.<sup>1</sup> In the negotiations which followed betwixt the king and his nobles, the earl of Lancaster still acted the most conspicuous and important part; and when a pacification was at last concluded betwixt the two parties, the approbation of Lancaster and his chief associates, who were absent at the time, was specially stipulated for by the rest.

In 1316, when, yielding to the necessities of his situation, Edward consented to the execution of the 'ordinances,' as they were called, and submitted to the other conditions imposed upon him by the predominating faction, the earl of Lancaster was appointed chief of the council, as well as commander-in-chief of the expedition then preparing against Scotland. On this occasion, the earl accepted the presidency on three conditions:—That he should be allowed to resign if the king refused to follow his advice;—that nothing of consequence should be done till he had been consulted;—and that unprofitable counsellors should be removed, from time to time, by authority of parliament. These terms were entered at his demand on the rolls.<sup>2</sup> These stipulations were wise and prudent; but the influence of the royalists,

<sup>1</sup> Walsing. 101.—T. de la More, 593.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. i. 352.

notwithstanding, prevailed to such an extent, that Lancaster hesitated to attend the rendezvous at Newcastle previous to the inroad upon Scotland, and absented himself likewise from two successive meetings of parliament. In justification of this conduct, he alleged his knowledge of a clandestine correspondence betwixt Edward and the Scottish monarch, and of designs having been formed against his own life by his enemies at court. Whatever truth there might be in either of these allegations, it is certain that the popular party hung together by ties of so slender a nature, that a breath of suspicion might dissolve them. There were always men found willing to link their own fortune to that of their sovereign; and if the influence of Lancaster had been even more predominating than it was, there existed a source of dissension in his own family, which must have gone far to weaken his hands in so turbulent a period. His countess, Alice, only child of Henry, earl of Lincoln, who had brought her husband an immense accession of property, being the greatest heiress in the kingdom, appears to have lived unhappily with him, and finally to have withdrawn from his house and bed, and placed herself under the protection of John de Warenne, earl of Surrey. The insulted husband instantly appealed to arms, and had made himself master of several of Surrey's castles, and likewise of some belonging to the king, when, by the interference of the pope's legates and the earl of Pembroke, both parties were prevailed upon to suspend hostilities, and appeal their differences to a parliament to be held at Lincoln. In this appeal, the influence of Lancaster prevailed, and the ordinances were again confirmed.

The rise of the Despensers, under the favour shown them by the king, was the next matter which supplied 'the turbulent Lancaster' with a pretext for taking up arms against his sovereign. Success again attended his rebellious proceedings; and on the same rolls, in which the order of banishment against the Spencers, father and son, was recorded, a general pardon was also entered to the earl and his associates for all treasons, murders, or felonies, committed by them up to that day.<sup>3</sup> Lancaster's domination, however, was now drawing to a close. Impatient of the yoke which his haughty cousin had contrived to fix upon him, Edward had recourse to arms; and being joined by a number of the barons, formerly confederates with Lancaster, but who now began to perceive the secret ambition which prompted his opposition to the king, compelled Lancaster and the earl of Hereford, who made common cause with him, to retire into Yorkshire. Lancaster had long been suspected of secretly negotiating with the Scots; he now entered into a formal alliance with the king of Scotland, and, emboldened by his promise of aid, advanced with his army to oppose the passage of the royalists over the Trent at Burton; but his plan of operations failing, he retreated northwards, pursued by the royal forces who came up with him at Boroughbridge, where his passage of the river was likewise disputed by Sir Andrew Harela. Repulsed in the attempt to force his way, and discouraged by the fall of his associate Hereford, who was slain in endeavouring to force the bridge, Lancaster returned into the town of Boroughbridge, probably in the hope that the promised reinforcement from Scotland might arrive during the night.

<sup>3</sup> Rot. Parl. i. 364.

But in this hope he was disappointed, and on receiving a summons to surrender next morning he retired into the chapel, and having recommended himself to the mercy of heaven, resigned himself to his captors, who conducted him to York. Here he was summarily arraigned before the king, six earls, and the royal barons, and was condemned to be drawn, hanged, and quartered as a traitor. The king was pleased to commute this ignominious punishment for that of decapitation, but his courtiers took care to signalise their own loyalty by heaping insults on the person of the traitor. On the 22d of March, 1322, being seven days after the battle of Boroughbridge, this once potent earl was led forth to execution from his own castle of Pontefract, on a lean jade without a bridle, to an eminence in the neighbourhood. The spectators pelted him with mud as he moved along, and taunted him with the title of King Arthur, the name which he had assumed in his correspondence with the Scots; but he bore their insults with calmness and dignity. "King of heaven," he cried, "grant me mercy, for the king of earth hath forsaken me!" On reaching the spot which had been fixed on for his execution, he knelt down at first with his face towards the east, but the malignity of his enemies was yet unsoftened, and as a last insult they ordered him to turn towards the north, that he might look upon his friends. He obeyed, and while in that posture his head was struck off by an executioner from London.<sup>4</sup> His associates, Badlesmere, Giffard, Barret, Cheyney, Fleming, and several others were afterwards formally tried and executed; and Harcla received for his services the forfeited earldom of Carlisle,—a boon which he was destined soon to forfeit in his turn for treasonable correspondence with the Scots. Lancaster's immense possessions being forfeited to the crown, were extensively employed in gratifying the rapacity of the Despensers; but the fortunes of the house of Lancaster did not long remain under a cloud. Thomas had died childless, but Henry, the second son of Edward Crouchback, contrived so to ingratiate himself with Edward's son and successor, that in the first parliament of that monarch, he obtained an act for the reversal of his brother's attainder, whereby he became repossessed of the confiscated family estates.

### Hugh Spenser.

DIED A. D. 1326.

THE king's chief favourite after the death of Gaveston was Hugh Le Despenser, or Spenser, a young gentleman of English birth, of high rank, and ample fortune. His father, a baron descended from the Conqueror's steward, had been in high trust under Edward I., and he himself held the office of chamberlain of the royal household. His handsome person and agreeable manners won for him the favour of his sovereign; while his marriage with a daughter of the late earl of Gloucester slain at Bannockburn, gave him possession of the greater portion of the county of Glamorgan. But these advantages rendered him so much the more an object of aversion and envy to the less favoured and less

<sup>4</sup> Rym. iii. 939.



potent nobility. Walsingham indeed represents him as drawing upon himself the hatred of the other courtiers, and of the Lancastrian party, by his arrogant and oppressive behaviour,<sup>1</sup> but there is no proof of this, and it seems probable that the head and front of his offending lay in his avowed attachment to the royal person, and the consequent gratitude of his sovereign.

In 1321, John de Mowbray having taken possession, without previously obtaining livery and seizin from the crown, of an estate belonging to his wife's father, the younger Spenser advised his royal master to claim the fief as escheated to the crown, and subsequently to confer it upon himself. This transaction excited the indignation of the lords of the marches, who immediately began to devastate the possessions of the favourite and destroy his castles. In these proceedings they were countenanced by the earls of Lancaster and Hereford, who also supported an act of accusation against the Spensers, consisting of eleven counts; it charged them with usurping the royal power, and alienating the king's affections from his faithful nobility, also generally with advising unconstitutional measures and extorting fines from all who solicited grants from the crown. The act concluded with these words: "Therefore we, the peers of the land, earls and barons, in the presence of our lord the king, do award that Hugh Le Despenser, the son, and Hugh Le Despenser, the father, be disinherited for ever, and banished from the kingdom of England, never to return, unless it be by the assent of the king, and by assent of the prelates, earls, and barons, in parliament duly summoned: and that they quit the realm by the port of Dover before the next feast of St John the Baptist: and that if they be found in England after that day, or ever return, they be dealt with as enemies of the king and kingdom." The king endeavoured to shield his favourite from the punishment demanded; he urged that the elder Spenser was beyond the sea on his service, that the younger was with his fleet guarding the Cinque Ports, and that it was unjust to condemn men before they had had an opportunity of answering the counts laid to their charge; the prelates also protested in writing against the sentence; but the plan of intimidation resorted to by Lancaster prevailed, and the royal assent to the banishment of the two Spensers was wrung from the unwilling monarch.

On the decline of Lancaster's popularity, and the consequent infusion of new hopes and fresh vigour into the royal cause, the two Spensers successively returned to England and obtained the repeal of the award enacted against them. The father was also created earl of Winchester, and was amply compensated for his losses by the gift of several of the forfeited estates on the fall of his arch-enemy the earl of Lancaster.<sup>2</sup> But both failed to profit by their recent lesson of adversity, and by a series of impolitic measures soon drew down upon themselves a heavier vengeance than that which they had so lately experienced. To the queen they became objects of the most decided aversion; and on her return from France, her proclamation was especially levelled against them as the principal source of the calamities which had befallen the nation under her husband's government. Bishop Orleton availing himself of the queen's known resentment towards the Spensers,

<sup>1</sup> P. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Brady 140—146.—Stat. x.

on being commanded to preach before her as she passed through Oxford in pursuit of her fugitive husband, selected for his text that passage in Genesis:—"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. She shall bruise thy head." These words he applied to Isabella and the Spensers.

On the surrender of Bristol by the burghers, the elder Spenser, to whom the town had been intrusted by Edward, was accused before Sir William Trussel, of having usurped the royal prerogatives, and done what in him lay to widen the breach between his sovereign and the people. After a mock trial, he was hurried to the place of execution, where he was embowelled alive; his body was afterwards hung on a gibbet for four days, and then cut into pieces and thrown to the dogs.<sup>3</sup>

The execution of the old man, now in his ninetieth year, took place within sight of the king and of his own son, who had hastily put to sea with the intention of retiring into the small island of Lundy in the Bristol channel, which had been previously fortified and stored with provisions. But after beating about for several days in the estuary of the Severn, contending with a strong westerly wind, the fugitives were compelled to re-land near Swansea, and endeavoured to elude the vigilance of their enemies by concealing themselves in different places between the monastery of Neath and the castle of Caerfilly. Here their retreat was soon discovered by Henry, earl of Leicester, who, having corrupted the fidelity of the natives, got possession of the younger Spenser, and Robert Baldoch, the king's chancellor, who had secreted themselves in the woods near the castle of Lantressan. Edward, on hearing of their apprehension, instantly surrendered himself to his cousin. Baldoch, being a priest, escaped immediate execution, but sank under the rigours of his imprisonment. A severer fate awaited Spenser. He was arraigned at Hereford before the same judge who had pronounced sentence against his father. The charges preferred against him were his returning to the kingdom after having been banished in parliament; his having caused the earl of Lancaster to be put to death at Pomfret castle; his having favoured the king of Scots, and by his treachery occasioned the defeat of Bannockburn; and finally, his having excited misunderstandings between the king and queen, and by bribes procured her being sent out of France. Most of these accusations were totally unfounded, and some of them even inconsistent with each other. But they sufficed for the purpose of his enemies, and sentence of death being recorded against him, he was immediately drawn in a black gown, with the arms of his family reversed, and a wreath of nettles on his head, to the place of execution, where he was hanged on a gallows fifty feet high. His head was afterwards sent as an agreeable present to the citizens of London, who decorated one of their bridges with it.

<sup>3</sup> Apolog. Ad. Orlet. 2765.—Leland's Collectanea, i. 673.

## Edward III.

BORN A. D. 1312.—DIED A. D. 1377.

If any thing could surprise a mind conversant with the waywardness of human nature, the utmost astonishment would be excited by the behaviour of the men who, during the former reign, and the earlier periods of the present, exercised an uncontrolled authority in the government of England. Gaveston fell a victim to the consequences of his own insolence; Spenser, untaught by the fearful lesson, was equally domineering, and perished by a yet severer fate; and, at the time now under consideration, Mortimer was wielding the sovereign power in a yet loftier spirit of despotic arrogance. The murder of the deposed king was followed by the treacherous circumvention, and the assassination under form of law, of his brother the duke of Kent. The popular indignation awakened by these atrocities, was repelled with a high hand, and the entire administration of the kingdom was usurped by the queen and her paramour. Mortimer, now created earl of March, became 'proud beyond measure,' indulged the magnificence of his taste in tournaments and splendid feasts, held the rein of empire with a tight and galling hand, and provoked his own son to give him the title of 'king of folly.' But all this extravagance was soon to cease: a master-spirit was now to become lord of the ascendant: Edward, intrepid and jealous of his right, was now eighteen, and in mental energy much beyond his years. Ill-disposed to yield a longer submission to an intrusive power, he confided his feelings to Lord Montacute, afterward created earl of Salisbury, and a plan for his emancipation was promptly devised. The parliament of 1334 was appointed to be held at Nottingham, and the usurper took up his quarters, with the queen, at the castle, which was strongly guarded. Admission in the usual way was rendered impracticable by the precautions used, but the aid of the governor, and the indication of a subterraneous passage, gave an easy entrance to the conspirators. The queen, rushing from her chamber, called in vain upon her 'fair son' to 'spare the gentil Mortimer;' he was seized, summarily condemned by his peers,<sup>1</sup> and ignominiously executed at Tyburn.

The age was warlike, and the genius of Edward well-suited to the character of the age. There were, close at hand, two antagonists who might have stirred the blood of a tamer monarch by their attitude either of resistance or defiance, and he accepted the challenge real or implied. France, however, was for the present put aside, and the feud with Scotland obtained his first attention. That country was again distracted by the weak and criminal dissensions of her nobles; and, though brave and able chiefs were not wanting to her cause, yet the master-minds had disappeared. Bruce was dead, and his son was a minor; Randolph did not long survive his friend, and James Douglas had fallen the victim of his romantic valour on his way to the Holy Land with the heart of Robert Bruce. Perhaps there is not to be found in history an instance of three such men giving themselves up so en-

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. ii. 52, &c.



tirely and so unitedly to the maintenance of the same cause; and it could not be but that their country would severely feel their loss, aggravated as it was by the evils of a long minority. Edward's first lesson in the practice of war had been given him in 1327, when Randolph and Douglas invaded Northumberland, and were suffered to retreat without fighting, through a strange want of skill or enterprize in the English leaders. But six years afterward he had thrown off his trammels, and was in the uncontrolled command of his own army when he gave battle to the Scots at Halidon-hill, and defeated them with tremendous loss.<sup>2</sup> France had the next turn: Edward quartered with his own the arms of the French king, and addressed himself in earnest to the conquest of that powerful kingdom. He made a league with Artaveldt, the bold brewer of Ghent, at that time the leader of the Flemings, and made his first attempt from the Flemish frontier. "We passed out," is his own language in a letter to his son, "of Valenciennes, and the same day began to burn in Cambresin, and burnt there all the following week; so that this country is very completely destroyed, as well in its corn as in cattle and other property." But in this reckless and unprofitable devastation all his preparations terminated, for Philip declined a battle, and Edward was compelled to retreat and to dismiss the greater part of his army. His next campaign commenced with a great naval victory. Philip, whether intending to interrupt the English fleet, or, as seems more probable, to make a demonstration of invading England during the absence of the king and the army, had prepared a mighty armament at Sluys: and on receiving intelligence of the fact, the English monarch, though with far inferior force, and in opposition to the intreaties of his council, set sail in quest of them, and, notwithstanding their numbers and strong position, led on to the attack. The fight was desperate and the victory complete. Edward's archers cleared the decks; the boarders rushed over every obstacle, and nearly the whole fleet remained in the possession of the assailants. The campaign on land, however, like the former, effected nothing against the defensive system of Philip, and a negotiation was commenced for the cessation of hostilities. In the meantime, circumstances were occurring elsewhere, which offered the means of access to the very heart of France, through one of her most vulnerable points. John duke of Brittany died, and, in the disputes which followed respecting the succession, Philip aided his nephew, Charles de Blois, while Edward eagerly took up the quarrel of the count de Montfort, who was himself in captivity, but whose right was resolutely defended by his wife, Jane. Besieged and hard-pressed in the fortress of Hennebon, she was relieved by that pride of chivalry, Sir Walter Manny, and Edward prepared for the invasion of France, on a plan more decidedly strategic than any which had been before attempted. His cousin, the gallant and accomplished earl of Derby, was sent to Guienne, where he obtained brilliant successes with a slender force. The king himself landed in Normandy, apparently with the double object of calling off from Gascony the formidable army which was now menacing the earl of Derby, and of traversing Picardy, joining a Flemish division in Artois, and laying siege to Calais. The first purpose was effected, but the second, through the

<sup>2</sup> Heming. 275.

unexplained failure of the Flemings, was only accomplished by the consummate generalship of Edward, and the unassisted energy of his gallant soldiers. From La Hogue, where he debarked, he marched forward, ravaging the country along the line of his progress, as far as Evreux, where he turned northward to Rouen. Here he found the bridge broken, and the whole line of the Seine rendered impracticable by the removal or destruction of all the means of passage, and by the presence of the king of France, with an overpowering force which he was still increasing by every possible exertion. After various ineffectual manœuvres, Edward succeeded, by a well-executed feint, in passing the Seine at Poissy, and he was followed close by his mortified antagonist. The Somme now lay between him and the termination of his march, and of that river every bridge was broken, and every ford strongly guarded. Across one of these shallows below Abbeville, he forced his way in the face of 12,000 men, and having secured a vantage-ground, turned upon his pursuers. It was on the field of Crecy that he formed his army and awaited the assault. In the arrangement of his small, but well-disciplined band, he seems to have displayed the perfection of military science; every arm was disposed for mutual support, and every local advantage turned to account. He dismounted a part of his cavalry; and here we may permit ourselves to retrace for a moment the history of one of the greatest modern improvements in the art of war.

In the days of antiquity, the Greeks had conquered the Asiatics by the superiority of infantry over cavalry; and the Romans had subdued the Greeks in the fatal battle of Pydna, who had pushed the system of the phalanx to an absurd extreme, by a judicious employment of light troops in aid of the heavy armed. The Roman infantry conquered the world, and gave, at Pharsalia, the strongest illustration of the inefficiency of horse against thoroughly trained foot. Time passed on, and the Roman discipline first degenerated and then disappeared. The iron chivalry of the middle ages trampled under foot the irregular and ill-armed militia, that crowded within a given space, stood no longer than they were under the protection of their horse. The true character and value of the footsoldier was entirely forgotten, and armies were counted formidable in proportion to the number of their cavalry. The archers of England seem to have made the earliest approach to an efficient infantry, yet they seem to have required great skill on the part of the commander, to avail himself to the utmost of their terrible discharge, without exposing them to be cut up by a cavalry charge. Their Scottish campaigns appear to have taught the English the value of a regular and compact infantry. At the battle of Falkirk, Wallace adopted an admirable formation; masses of spearmen connected by lines of bowmen and supported by horse, and it is by no means improbable that he might have been at least able to hold his ground, but for the treachery of the Scottish chieftains, who rode off without striking a blow, leaving the Ettrick foresters to be sabred by the English knights, and the close columns to be overwhelmed by the missiles of the southern archers. At Bannockburn Bruce improved upon the plan of Wallace: he dismounted the larger portion of his cavalry, preserving at the same time greater mobility in his formation. At Halidon-Hill we find Edward apparently adopting the same principles; he awaited the assault himself on foot, and when the attack had been repelled, urged on a vigor-

ous pursuit. And in the present instance we find him acting on the same system with all such improvements as his own genius and experience might suggest. The archers were so posted as to give the utmost effect to their destructive aim, and at the same time to afford them the support of the heavy-armed foot; while the king kept the third line tight in hand, as a reserve in case of calamity.

It was on the 26th of August 1346, late in the day, that the French appeared in front of the English position. An eclipse of the sun intervened, and a fierce storm of thunder and lightning passed over the field; but at 5 o'clock in the evening all was clear, and the battle joined. It was fierce but brief; the French fought with impetuous courage, but without concert or combination; numbers failed before science, and a victory, splendid and decisive, rewarded the skill and discipline of Edward and his followers. His son, the Black Prince, fought in this his first battle, and nobly won his spurs. The triumph of Crecy saved Guienne, while John, duke of Normandy and heir of France, had led a hundred thousand men against the earl of Derby, who very wisely retired before the storm, and waited in Bourdeaux the issue of events. During more than three months was the French prince detained before the fortress of Aiguillon; in vain did his immense army, in four divisions, relieving each other every three hours, keep up the assault through six consecutive days; in vain were towers erected, and an unceasing shower of stones poured upon the place from every military engine then in use; vain were all the stratagems of war,—Walter Manny was in the fortress, and neither he nor his intrepid companions were men to yield while a wall was left them to defend. John swore never to raise the siege until the place was in his power; but necessity is greater than an oath, and his highness had to digest his perjury as he might, since he failed to take the place. He was compelled to reinforce his father, and Lord Derby rushed like a destroying torrent over Saintonge and Poitou, finishing his victorious course by the storm and sack of the wealthy and well-peopled city of Poitiers. In the meantime Edward laid siege to Calais, while Philip collected his troops for the purpose of raising the blockade. The English camp was unapproachable but by fortified defiles which intimidated the French generals, and the king sent Edward a challenge braving him to a ranged battle; the invitation was accepted and the guest presented himself at the appointed time and place, but Philip failed in courtesy and declined the meeting. The town yielded at discretion, and if we do not here recite the hundred times told romance of the surrender of Calais, and of the half-dozen heroes with halters round their necks, it is for the simple reason, that we doubt it altogether. Old Froissart, that immortal chronicler, is, we suspect, a better painter than historian; and we refuse, on his sole credit, to charge Edward with an act of ferocity when he appears to be innocent. That he was exceedingly irritated against the townsmen, who had grown rich by privateering and piracy at the expense of his people, we can readily suppose; and that he might assume a stern countenance and insist upon a humiliating submission, is also probable; but that he ever intended to put the delegates to death is clearly false. It was common in those days to require such an act of degradation, with the understanding that nothing more severe was intended; and the old romancer himself mentions that when Edward rejected their appeal of



mercy, he winked aside upon his attendants, evidently as a signal for their interference. The English monarch was by no means remarkable for tender-heartedness, but it is not to be forgotten that he suffered, at an early period of the siege, nearly two thousand of the inhabitants to leave the town, giving each of them an ample meal and a liberal largess; and, if his humanity stopped there,—if, at a more advanced period of the blockade he refused to give passage to a second emigration, and sternly saw five hundred individuals perish between his camp and the walls,—it may also be remembered that, politically and militarily speaking, the attempt to pass them forward was an encroachment on his former concession; the people had been detained so long as they could be of use, and it was an imprudent attempt to dismiss as non-combatants, persons who had become an incumbrance. Such, however, is war, systematically ferocious, and if, in the present instance, we cannot wholly acquit the king of England, the guilt must be at least shared by the governor of Calais. The fall of this fortress was followed by a truce between the contending monarchs, which was irregularly kept for several years.

Edward, not content with his successes as a general, seems to have had a strange love of fighting for its own sake. A treacherous attempt to seize Calais, notwithstanding the armistice, was defeated by a counter-plot; and a select band, of which the king was one, under Sir Walter Manny, encountered the body of French troops which was waiting for the opening of the gates. Edward engaged hand to hand Eustace de Ribeaumont, a gallant knight, by whom he was twice beaten on his knees, but whom he ultimately compelled to surrender. The French party became prisoners and were admitted to ransom, but de Ribeaumont, crowned by his conqueror with a chaplet of pearls, was dismissed freely and with generous praise.<sup>3</sup> On another occasion did this warrior-king gratuitously expose himself to extreme danger. The mercantile navigators of Biscay were little better than a set of pirates, and lost no opportunity of doing an ill turn to their great rivals, the mariners of England. Aware that this conduct was likely to be sharply visited by a monarch like Edward, the Biscayans, who traded extensively with Flanders, collected and armed their ships, committing many acts of piracy as they sailed up the channel. Expostulation was answered by insult, redress refused, and aware that reprisals were probably at hand, La Cerda, the admiral of these older buccaneers, had strengthened his armament and increased the number of his fighting men. Not content with committing the business to his naval commanders, Edward resolved to command in person, and after a desperate action, in which both himself and his son were in extreme danger, defeated the enemy with severe loss. Victory is an animating thing, but in the end even the victor may find it dearly bought. In the recent conflicts much of England's best blood had been poured out freely but unprofitably. Taxation pressed hard upon the victorious people, and plague, travelling as it is wont from the pestilential East, traversed Europe, wasting as it passed. In London the cemeteries were gorged, and Sir Walter Manny purchased a field of thirteen acres, the present site of the Charter House, where, during several weeks, two hundred corpses *per diem* were deposited. So dire was the contagion that the very cattle died in the

<sup>3</sup> Froissard, 140.

field and in the stall; labour became costly to a mischievous extent; and though the landlord waived his claim for rent, the food of man was at a price that severely enhanced the sufferings of the poor whom the plague had spared.

War again—war with France, and for trifles light as air: for titles and homages, for parchments and genuflexions! The Black Prince, with sixty thousand men, plundered and devastated the south of France, from the Pyrenees to Thoulouse. Carcassone, not inferior to York in extent,—Narbonne, large as London,—were given to the flames. Edward himself advanced from Calais. The French system was defensive; they drained the country, and left the English to extract, as they could, sustenance from the waste. The Scots, at the instigation of their allies, invaded the English border; but Edward, returning from France, took such deep vengeance for the foray, that the ‘Burnt Candlesmas’ was long remembered as a by-word and vindictive slogan. In 1356, the Prince of Wales renewed his inroad with a smaller army, varying the scene by ravaging in the direction of Auvergne and Berri. But he had advanced too far; his communications were cut off, and he knew nothing of the movements of his opponents, until his outposts fell in with the enemy near Poitiers, between him and his own frontier. Seven to one is the lowest odds assigned by the annalists of the time, and the prince listened not unwillingly to proposals of mediation from the cardinal de Perigord, nor was he niggardly in concession:—“My honour and the honour of my army excepted, I will consent to any sacrifice.” King John of France, however, confident in a superiority which seemed to make resistance madness, would accept nothing short of personal surrender, and the parties prepared for battle. Every precaution was taken on both sides, but the English commander omitted nothing that a consummate knowledge of the art of war could suggest: trenches and barricades added strength to a position already strong and inaccessible except by a road of which the hedges were lined with archers. On the 19th of September, the battle was fought. The French men-at-arms entered the defile, where they were suffered to advance until irretrievably engaged in its long and narrow windings: then began the rout,—the terrible archery of England poured its incessant storm,—the generals of the first division were killed or taken,—and the second line, assailed by the archers in front, and turned by a body of cavalry which suddenly appeared on its flank, gave way. Then the English prince gave the word, ‘In the name of God and St George, banners! advance.’ The fight now became terrible. John brought up his reserves, and made a noble effort to wrest victory from his conquerors. All was in vain: slaughter wrought her perfect work, and the gallant king of France remained in the hands of the English. Historians and bards have vied with each other in lauding the courtesy of the Black Prince to his enforced guest. On the field and in his father’s capital, that *gentil seigneur* honoured himself by honouring his prisoner.<sup>4</sup> In truth, both father and son were a brilliant pair; mirrors of knighthood,—gentle in hall,—lions in fight; and their valour now had its ample reward in the exhibition of two sovereign princes, captives to England’s sword. Ten years and more had David, king of

<sup>4</sup> Froissard, 164.

Scots, remained in England, since he was compelled to surrender at the battle of Neuil's Cross, and shortly after this he was released on ransom.

In 1360, the English king, with a brilliant army, attended for the first time by an extensive commissariat, advanced to the walls of Paris, but the season was adverse, and he retired with great loss, occasioned by one of the most tremendous tempests recorded in European history. In no long time after these events, peace was concluded, but the French derived little benefit from the cessation of arms. The 'companies,' as they were called, consisting of the soldiers of fortune who had been employed during the war, refused to disband, and setting military interference at defiance, maintained themselves by violence in the heart of France, until they were led by Bertrand du Guesclin into Spain, to the assistance of the bastard Don Enrique, Count Trastamara, against his half-brother, the legitimate Pedro, king of Castile. The latter craved the aid of the Black Prince. The battle of Najara, where Du Guesclin was beaten and made prisoner, replaced Pedro on his throne for a season; but the climate of Spain ruined the health of Edward, who lingered the remaining years of his life through a long and depressing malady.

In the meantime, Charles V. of France was steadily pursuing a cautious but effective system of policy, ostensibly pacific at first, but terminating in a war, not of battles, but of sieges and manœuvres,—exhausting the means of the English by constant pressure upon their resources, and allowing them no opportunity of retrieving their losses by a decisive blow. At length the Black Prince, notwithstanding his debility, took the field, and his antagonists retired. But his last act was a bloody deed,—a massacre of the helpless,—the women, children, and unwarlike burghers of Limoges, who had provoked him by what may have been treachery, but was probably mere cowardice, in delivering up their city to the king of France. After this, his standard was no more unfurled: he returned to England, and lingered during six years, condemning, but unable to restrain, the mal-administration of the kingdom, and seconding, to the utmost of his power, the efforts of the 'good parliament' to reform the government. His death, June 8, 1376, threw the power of the state into the hands of his brother, John of Gaunt (Ghent), duke of Lancaster, and the work of state-reformation was roughly checked. The king seems to have been, for some time past, lapsing into dotage. His excellent queen, Philippa of Hainault, was dead, and a rapacious mistress tyrannised over his closing years. He died, June 21, 1377.

## Roger, Lord Mortimer.

DIED A. D. 1330.

AMONG the partisans of the unfortunate earl of Lancaster, none acted so conspicuous a part in the transactions which disgraced the close of the second Edward's reign as Roger, Lord Mortimer of Wigmore, one of the most potent barons of the Welsh marches. After the battle of Boroughbridge, he had been condemned for participating in



Lancaster's treason; but his punishment was remitted for perpetual imprisonment in the tower of London. He had the good fortune, however, to make his escape, by corrupting the fidelity of his keeper, and, hastening to France, joined Edward's queen in her exile in Paris, and was made the chief officer of her household. The graces of his person, and his fascinating manners, soon won upon her affections; she gave him her confidence, and ultimately sacrificed to him her honour and fidelity.<sup>1</sup>

The views of the queen and her paramour were from the first directed to the deposition of Edward; and they pursued this object with a resolution and boldness worthy of a better cause. But their success could not blind the people to their guilt. Sir James Mackintosh, indeed, considers it doubtful how far the licentious manners of the queen and her paramour rendered their government more generally unacceptable in an age when such vices must have been scarcely known to an ignorant people, and could not be sincerely blamed by a profligate nobility. Nevertheless, men began to pity the dethroned king and insulted husband, and the clergy publicly inveighed in their sermons against the scandalous connexion which existed between the queen and Mortimer. His elevation to the earldom of March increased the haughtiness and ambition of the favourite, and thus drew upon him the hatred and jealousy of the nobles; while the measures of his administration, and particularly the dishonourable peace with Scotland, proved in the highest degree unpopular. Henry, earl of Lancaster, and Thomas, earl of Kent, entered into an association with several of the other leading nobility, for the purpose of resisting the measures of the favourite, and procuring the emancipation of the young king from his mother's influence; they also resolved to call Mortimer to account for the murder of the late king, for depriving the regency of its proper influence and authority, and for embezzling the public treasure. But before matters came to an issue, Kent's courage failed him; and by the intervention of some of the prelates, an agreement was patched up betwixt him and Mortimer. Their reconciliation was in appearance only. A transaction of the most intricate treachery followed. Strange rumours were industriously circulated by the secret agents of Mortimer, that the late king was still alive, and Corfe castle was indicated as the place of his confinement. Meanwhile the earl of Kent received letters, undoubtedly forgeries, from the pope, exhorting him to liberate his brother from prison. Different messengers brought him various flattering promises of co-operation and assistance from several leading personages; he was assured of aid from Scotland; and Sir John Mau-travers, the chief actor in the late cruel tragedy in Berkeley castle, not only encouraged him in the belief that his brother was yet alive, but actually undertook to be the bearer of letters from him to the imprisoned king.<sup>2</sup> Such were the statements which the earl himself on his examination by Sir Robert Howel, when apprehended on a charge of conspiracy against the existing government, ingenuously confessed: he also acknowledged that he had, in consequence of the encouragement then received, written letters to his brother. The infamous policy of the secret instigator of the whole plot was almost forced into

<sup>1</sup> Walsing. 122.

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. ii. 53.

sight during the proceedings which were directed against the unfortunate earl; but his influence and that of the queen still bore him through. A parliament assembled at Winchester in 1330, pronounced sentence of death and forfeiture against the earl of Kent; and on the 21st of March he was led, by the order of his nephew, to the place of execution; but so general was the sympathy felt for the unfortunate prince, that it was evening before an executioner could be found to perform the office. At last, after a painful suspense of several hours, a felon from the Marshalsea was induced, by a promise of pardon, to strike off his head.<sup>3</sup> Mortimer lived to acknowledge the innocence of his victim; but Edmund's fate would have been more generally pitied by posterity, had he not been known to have countenanced the proceedings of the queen's faction before, and rendered himself unpopular by his haughty and oppressive behaviour. To silence public clamour, however, it was found necessary to issue a proclamation, ordering the sheriffs to arrest and imprison any one who should be heard to say that the earl of Kent was unjustly put to death, or suffered for any cause than treason, or that Edward of Caernarvon, the king's father, was still alive.

Mortimer had now reached the highest pinnacle of his fortunes, and began to affect a state and dignity equal, or superior, to that of royalty itself. But the inevitable tendency of a continued and unmixed career of servility, treachery, and rapacity, soon became apparent in the critical position of his affairs. All parties laid aside their reciprocal animosities for a time, and united in their hatred of Mortimer, and resolution to bring the arch-traitor to condign punishment. The king himself, though young in years, had long been galled by the fetters which he knew his mother and her minion to have placed upon him; but so closely was he surrounded by the emissaries of Mortimer, that he felt the utmost caution to be necessary for his own safety in prosecuting any measures for the overthrow of the favourite. At last he ventured to communicate his feelings to Lord Montacute, who engaged the lords Molins and Clifford, Sir John Nevil, Sir Edward Bohun, and others, in the design to seize the person of Mortimer. The castle of Nottingham, in which it was known Mortimer would reside during the session of parliament about to be holden in that city, was fixed upon for the scene of the enterprise. When the time approached for carrying their scheme into effect, Sir William Eland, the governor of the castle, being won over by Montacute, pointed out a subterraneous passage leading from the west side of the rock into the castle, which was unknown to Mortimer, and through which he undertook to introduce the king's friends. Mortimer had received some dark hints of the conspiracy which was forming against him, and had taken every precaution to secure his own safety; he had even informed the council of what he suspected, and boldly charged the young king with being privy to the plot. But on the evening of the same day on which he made this statement, the conspirators gained admission to the castle through the subterraneous passage above noticed, and bursting into the apartment of Mortimer, who was at the moment engaged in consultation with the bishop of Lincoln, led him away as their prisoner.

<sup>3</sup> Henning. 271.—Leland Collect. 476. 352.

Next morning the king announced by proclamation that he had taken the reins of government into his own hands.

A parliament was immediately summoned at London for the trial of Mortimer. The principal charges exhibited against him were,—that he had accroached, or assumed the royal prerogative which parliament had committed to ten lay-lords and four prelates,—that he had placed and displaced ministers at his pleasure, and set John Wyard to be a spy on the king,—that he had removed the late king from Kenilworth to Berkeley castle, where he had caused him to be traitorously murdered,—that he had inveigled the earl of Kent into a false charge of treason,—that he had embezzled the royal treasures,—and that he had divided with his associates the twenty thousand marks already paid by the king of Scots.<sup>4</sup> The peers, after some deliberation, pronounced all these charges to be “notoriously true, and known to them and all the people,” and condemned Mortimer “to be drawn and hanged, as a traitor and enemy of the king and kingdom.” His associates, Sir Simon Bereford, Sir John Mautravers, John Deverel, and Boeges de Bayenne, were condemned to death at the same time. The favourite and Bereford were hanged at a place called the Elms, near Tyburn, on the 29th of November, 1300; but, as the other three were at large, a price was set on their heads. At the solicitation of the pope, the queen-mother was spared the ignominy of a public trial, but was adjudged to have forfeited her estates, and confined to her manor of Risings, where she passed in obscurity the remaining twenty-seven years of her life.

## John of Gaunt.

BORN A. D. 1340.—DIED A. D. 1399.

JOHN of Gaunt, or Ghent, was the fourth son of Edward III. Trained to arms under the eyes of his warlike father, he early approved himself worthy of his descent, behaving, as Froissart tells us, very gallantly in many hard-fought fields. By his marriage with Blanche, the surviving co-heiress of Henry, third earl of Lancaster, the honours, titles, and estates of that powerful house, became concentrated in his person; but on the death of his first wife he contracted a still more splendid alliance with Constantia, one of the heiresses of Pedro, surnamed the Cruel, in virtue of which he assumed the imposing title of king of Castile. On his return from Spain, his father's marked partiality for him, and the indications which he frequently manifested of an ambitious disposition, roused the jealousy of the Black prince, who beheld in him a powerful and subtle rival of his own son.

In the latter years of his father's reign, John contrived to manage all things his own way, by means of ‘a huge rout of retainers,’ who bore down all opposition in every quarter. Not satisfied with hectoring the citizens of London, whose turbulent spirit was often directed against his measures, he embroiled himself with the prelacy by his persecution of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester, and even defied the

<sup>4</sup> Rot. Parl. ii. 52, &c.



vatican itself by the protection and countenance which he afforded to Wickliffe. When that venerable reformer was cited to appear before the primate and the bishop of London, Lancaster took his place beside him, and ordered a chair to be given to him, that he might sit in the presence of his accusers; and when the bishop of London opposed this as disrespectful to the judges, a vehement altercation ensued, in which Lancaster declared "that he would rather pluck the bishop by the hair of his head out of the church, than he would take this at his hand." The assembled citizens, who bore no good will to the duke, supported their bishop, and a great tumult ensued in which the duke narrowly escaped with his life. His palace in the Savoy was attacked and plundered by the mob, and their outrages were only stayed by the interference of the bishop himself. The mayor and aldermen of the city sought to make their peace with the duke by the most lavish protestations of regret for what had happened, and of attachment to his person; but his pride had received too severe a wound to be so easily soothed. He dismissed them from all their offices, and filled up the new magistracy with his own creatures.

The apprehensions justly excited by John of Ghent's ambitious temper, induced the commons to petition King Edward on the death of the Black prince, to make a public declaration in favour of his grandson, Richard of Bourdeaux. The transactions of the preceding reign were yet too fresh in their memories for them to dismiss their fears of a new usurpation of the royal powers during the young king's minority; and no one participated more fully in the general alarm than the princess Joan, the mother of Richard. But to the surprise of all, John of Ghent was one of the first to tender allegiance to his nephew, and submitted, without a murmur, to the decision of the barons, appointing twelve permanent counsellors in aid of the chancellor and treasurer, to direct the reins of government during the minority of the king. Richard's first parliament showed that the influence of Lancaster was somewhat on the wane; and the ill success of an expedition to Bretagne, intrusted to his command, sunk him still lower in public estimation. Accordingly, in all the popular tumults of this reign, we find John of Gaunt specially marked out as an object of the people's dislike. When Wat Tyler's mob held sway in the city of London, they obliged the passengers not only to swear allegiance to King Richard, but also that they never would receive any king of the name of John: "And this," says Holinshed, "was the envy which they bore to the duke of Lancaster, John of Gaunt." His palace in the Savoy was also again attacked and thoroughly sacked; and lest their motives should be mistaken, the duke's massy plate was cut into pieces, and his jewels ground to powder and mingled with the dust. Alarmed at these unequivocal manifestations of hostile feeling towards him, the duke retired into Scotland, where he remained until invited by royal proclamation to return to England and authorised to travel with a body-guard for his better personal protection. Notwithstanding, however, of this act of royal grace, strong suspicions still continued to be entertained against him, and while employed in France in the month of May 1384, the council resolved upon his arrest, determined probably to this severe

<sup>1</sup> Fox.

measure by the information afforded by a Carmelite friar of a conspiracy having been formed for the purpose of placing the crown upon the duke's head. Informed of what was intended against him, Lancaster, on his return to England, contrived to escape the vigilance of his enemies and reach his castle of Pontefract, where he prepared for open resistance.

In 1386, at the invitation of the king of Portugal, and induced by the hope of obtaining the crown of Castile, Lancaster, and his brother-in-law, the earl of Cambridge, led an army into Portugal to assist John against the king of Castile. His daughters, by both his wives, accompanied him, and he left the care of his possessions in England to his son, the earl of Derby. Richard beheld his uncle's preparations for departure with great pleasure, and in his anxiety to hurry him out of the kingdom, appropriated one-half of the supplies for the year to defray the expenses of the expedition. The enterprise was in its results well-calculated to gratify the family pride of the duke, for the king of Portugal accepted the hand of Philippa, his eldest daughter by his first wife, while Henry, the son and heir of the king of Castile, married Catherine, the duke's only child by his marriage with Constantia. Two hundred thousand crowns were paid to Lancaster to defray the expenses of his expedition, and an annuity of one hundred thousand florins was settled on him, and another to the same amount on his duchess. Meanwhile England was threatened with an invasion from France, and the cabal headed by the duke of Gloucester, was formed against Richard's administration. But the firmness which the young king so unexpectedly betrayed, aided by the support which both the duke of Lancaster and his son, the earl of Derby, animated by their jealousy of the rival pretensions of Gloucester, hastened to tender him, enabled him to avert the crisis, and chastise the aspiring insolence of the new rebel.

When age had somewhat chilled the ambition of Lancaster, and he had thus ceased to be formidable, his nephew rewarded his services against the recent faction by granting to him for life the sovereignty of Guienne. And when, upon the death of Constantia, his second wife, the uxorious duke married Catherine Swynford, who was only a knight's widow, and had been employed by his first duchess to educate her daughter, in which situation she bore him three sons, the marriage was resented as a disgrace by all the other princes of the blood; but the king himself, to please his uncle, approved of it, legitimated the children, and raised the eldest son to the dignity of earl of Somerset. He died in 1399, soon after the banishment of his son Henry.

### **Sir Walter Manny.**

DIED A. D. 1372.

FEW more illustrious names grace the annals of England's chivalry than that of Sir Walter Manny. The son of one of the earl of Hainault's bravest knights, he amply sustained the honour of his gallant family in many a hard-fought field, and by his prowess contributed more than any single arm, with the exception, perhaps, of the Black

prince himself, to the success of those chivalrous expeditions which England undertook against the banded powers of France on their own soil. Though a foreigner by birth as well as by lineage, he made England the country of his adoption at an early age, and all his laurels were won in her service. We, therefore, hold ourselves fully entitled to class him amongst those illustrious men whose names and fortunes are identified with the period of English history to which they belong.

When Isabella of England, accompanied by her son, arrived at Valenciennes to solicit the aid of William, earl of Hainault, against her husband, Edward II., the young Walter, whom the earl had taken under his own guardianship after the death of his father, won the friendship of the prince of Wales, and would have accompanied him to England if his patron had not disapproved of the proposal at the time; but he was soon afterwards sent over in the suite of the lady Philippa, Earl William's daughter, in the quality of page. His first martial service was performed in the camp before Berwick, when that place was vigorously besieged by Edward III. at the head of his northern nobles, and gallantly defended by Lord Marr and Sir Alexander Seaton. In the battle of Halidon-hill, so disastrous to the Scottish arms, Walter de Manny bore himself so gallantly, that all confessed him worthy of the honour of knighthood, which the king bestowed upon him on the field.

In 1337, Edward having resolved to invade France from the Flemish frontiers, the joint command of the expedition to open the Scheldt was intrusted to Sir Walter and the earl of Derby. The forces placed under their command on this occasion, consisted of 600 men-at-arms, and 2000 archers. The garrison, on the isle of Cadsant, commanding the navigation of the river, amounted to 5000; 1000 of whom were men-at-arms. As the English squadron bore down, Lord Derby, standing on the poop of his vessel, exclaimed to Sir Walter, whose ship was at a little distance, "What think you, Sir Walter, shall we assail these Flemings, or delay?" "As wind and tide are in our favour, it becomes us not to lose them," replied Manny, adding at the same time, "In the name of God and St George, let us run close on shore!" "In the name of God and St George, be it so!" rejoined the earl, and the signal for attack was instantly given by the trumpets. The English archers drew their bows 'stiff and strong,' and quickly cleared the outworks of their defenders, while the barons and knights, with their men-at-arms, plunging into the sea, made good their landing, repulsed the headlong charge of the Flemish horsemen, and carried the whole works by assault. This success having opened the way for the English army, Edward soon afterwards arrived, and prepared to invest Cambray. In the meanwhile, Sir Walter having collected fifty lances, proceeded to redeem a promise which he had made in the presence of certain noble knights and fair dames, that he would be the first that should enter France, and take some castle or stronghold. For this purpose he spurred with his gallant band through Brabant, and having gained the wood of Blaton, he there broke his design to his companions, and suggested that they should surprise the town of Montaigne. The proposal was received with acclamations, and the gallant band arrived at Montaigne a little before sunrise; but although they entered the town without opposition, they found the garrison of the



castle fully prepared for them, and would have been speedily overpowered by numbers, had they not succeeded in making good their retreat. Sir Walter, however, was not to be thus baffled in his object. He persuaded his companions, instead of returning straight to the English camp, to diverge by Conde and Valenciennes in search of adventures, and the result gratified their most ardent wishes. The governor of Bouchain, mistaking them for the advanced guard of a great army, opened his gates to them; and the castle of St Eveque, at no great distance from Cambray, was taken by a coup-de-main.

In the fight with the powerful fleet of Philip of France, off the coast of Hampshire, Sir Walter Manny was the first to board the enemy. He sprung from his ship on the deck of the Christopher, and his example being followed by other knights, that huge vessel was speedily in the hands of the English. The fight has been described as a 'very murderous and horrible' one, but it ended in the total defeat of the Normans. We next find this star of chivalry engaged in the relief of the fortress of Hennebon, then gallantly held out by Montford's countess against Charles of Blois. At the head of a small, but select body of men, Manny cast himself into the town at the very moment when it was about to be given up to the enemy; his arrival changed the face of affairs, and the negotiations for surrender being broken off, the troops of Charles renewed their attacks with more determined fury. A catapult of more than ordinary dimensions had greatly annoyed the townspeople by the enormous masses of stone which it cast into the place. Sir Walter was at dinner with the countess, when one of these projectiles came crashing through the roof of an adjoining house, to the great alarm of the ladies; but Sir Walter instantly vowed to destroy the machine, and rising from table with the other knights, in a few minutes sallied forth from a postern gate, overturned and hewed the catapult to pieces, burned the sow, and threw the whole camp of the enemy into confusion. On their return, after having performed this gallant deed, the enemy, having recovered from their surprise, pressed hard upon them; but the knights stood their ground until their archers and attendants had passed the ditch in safety, after which they crossed the drawbridge themselves, and were received with hearty congratulations by the townspeople, while the countess "came down from the castle to meet them, and with a most cheerful countenance, kissed Sir Walter and all his companions, one after another, like a noble and valiant dame." The consequence of this sortie was, that the corps employed in the siege under Prince Louis of Spain, abandoned their camp the same evening, and marched to join Charles himself before the castle of Arrai. From this latter place, Prince Louis marched upon Dinant, which opened its gates to him, and then passing into Lower Brittany, landed at Quimperle, and proceeded to lay waste the surrounding country. But Sir Walter, hearing of these proceedings, resolved to have another and bolder stroke at his enemy. With the sanction of the countess, he placed his men-at-arms and 3000 archers on board of ship, and set sail for the harbour, where the fleet of Louis lay. On his arrival at Quimperle he found the enemy's vessels but slightly guarded, and immediately made himself master of the whole. He then set out to intercept the prince, who, with 6000 men, was hurrying back to the coast, having learned the arrival of his antagonist.

They met, and a fierce conflict ensued, in which Louis's whole force was nearly cut to pieces, or made prisoners, the prince himself only escaping with a small retinue.

On his return to Hennebon, Sir Walter assaulted and took many places of considerable strength, but little could be done towards the ultimate deliverance of Brittany, without fresh reinforcements from Edward. Carhaix fell into Charles's hands, and Hennebon was again invested. This time the siege was pressed more vigorously than before; but the courage and resources of De Manny seemed to rise with the difficulties of his position. Hearing that his friends, Sir John Botelor, and Sir Matthew Trelawney, who had been made prisoners by the enemy, were about to be sacrificed to Prince Louis's thirst for revenge, he called his knights around him, and proposed that they should immediately attempt the rescue of their comrades. The plan proposed was sufficiently daring; but the courage and high enthusiasm of the parties engaged in it, directed by the genius and indomitable valour of De Manny, secured its success. The prisoners were relieved at the very moment when they expected to be led forth to execution; and Charles, perceiving that Hennebon, with such defenders, was not likely soon to fall into his hands, dismissed the greater number of his followers, and retired to Carhaix.

In the campaign in Gascony with the earl of Derby, Sir Walter gave ample evidence of his being possessed of the higher qualities of a military commander. The fall of Bergerac was chiefly due to his skill in combining the most rapid movements with the most deliberate and well-advised plans of attack. Town after town, and castle after castle, fell before his genius, till the English standard floated over almost every stronghold in Gascony. One of the most splendid victories obtained by the English arms in this campaign, was wholly due to the valour and sagacity of Sir Walter. The earl of Derby, with Manny in his train, had marched to the relief of Auberoche, then closely invested by the count de Lisle. Orders had been sent to Lord Pembroke, who commanded at Bergerac, to join them on the march; but before he came up, they found themselves with a force of only 300 men-at-arms, and 600 hobeler archers, in the presence of De Lisle, at the head of 10,000 men. In this emergency, De Manny's counsel was prompt, but wise:—"Gentlemen," said he, addressing a council of war, "it were a shame to us were our friends to perish, and we so nigh to them. Let us mount our horses, skirt this wood, and advance upon the enemy's camp. We will come upon them unexpectedly, just as they are sitting down to supper, and with St George to aid us, they shall be discomfited." The proposal was well received, and instantly put into execution with complete success. The French were beaten down before they knew whence their assailants came, and De Lisle himself was taken prisoner.

The winter of 1344-5 was spent by Manny in well-earned indulgence amid the gaities of the viceregal court at Bourdeaux; but the campaign was early opened by the duke of Normandy at the head of a large army, and the indefatigable Manny required no summons to the post of danger or enterprise. The important castle of Auguillon was threatened, and Sir Walter, in the face of 100,000 men, threw himself into it with 300 men-at-arms, a corps of archers, and good store of

'meal.' In the month of May, the duke of Normandy sat down before this stronghold, but October came and its gallant defenders still held out as vigorously as ever. At last the besiegers determined to cross the river and cut off all means of foraging from the garrison. A bridge was with this view constructed at a prodigious expense of labour, but just as the troops were about to put themselves in motion upon it, Manny let slip three heavy vessels, which carried down by a rapid current, struck the props and swept them away. A second bridge, stronger and better provided with the means of warding off a similar attack, was instantly constructed; but Manny, in a single night, cut down or rendered abortive the labour of several weeks. Again, De Lisle resumed his bridge-building, and with more success; his army crossed the Garonne, and the castle was assaulted without intermission for several successive weeks. Battering-rams were wrought incessantly against the walls,—catapults and other engines poured showers of stones, beams, and darts, upon the battlements,—while from large moveable towers or belfries, the cross-bow men and archers sent flights of arrows within the walls. Still the brave De Manny, untired in spirit and unexhausted in resources, held out, till the assailants, despairing of conquest by any other means, thought of converting the assault into a blockade; but the battle of Crecy changed the face of affairs, and the siege of Auguillon was suddenly raised by the duke, who set off to support his father.

When the duke was fairly gone, Manny, loathing to be shut up in inactivity whilst his brethren in arms were gaining such splendid laurels elsewhere, sent for a 'great knight,' whom he had captured, and demanded to know what sum he was willing to pay for his ransom. "Three thousand crowns," replied his prisoner. "I know you are nearly related to the duke of Normandy," answered Manny, "that you are much esteemed by him, and one of his counsellors. I will set you free upon your honour provided you will instantly go to the duke and obtain a passport for myself and twenty others, that we may ride through France to Calais, paying courteously for whatever we may require. If you obtain this, I will hold you free from your ransom, and also be much indebted to you; but if you fail, you will return within a month to this fortress as your prison." The knight accepted the proposal and obtained the wished-for passport; and such was the high faith and courtesy of those days, that under its protection, Manny, with his twenty companions, set out to travel the whole breadth of France, and were well received and hospitably treated wherever they came. At Orleans, however, Sir Walter was arrested by order of King Philip and conducted to Paris, where he was cast into prison; but the duke of Normandy hastened to remonstrate against such a breach of knightly faith, and declared, that unless Sir Walter was instantly liberated, he would never again wield sword or lance in defence of the French crown. The king yielded to his son's representation, and Manny was not only set at liberty, but received various costly jewels and other gifts from Philip, which he accepted on the condition that he should be permitted to return them if his royal master disapproved of his retaining them. The conclusion of the story we give in Froissart's own words:—"He arrived at Calais," says the chronicler, "where he was well-received by the king of England, who, being informed by Sir



Walter of his presents he had from the king of France, said, 'Sir Walter, you have hitherto most loyally served us, and we hope you will continue to do so : send back to King Philip his presents, for you have no right to keep them. We have enough, thank God, for you and for ourselves, and are fully disposed to do you all the good in our power for the services you have rendered us.' Thereupon, Sir Walter took out all the jewels, and giving them to his cousin, the lord of Mansoe, said :—' Ride into France to King Philip, and recommend me to him, and tell him that I thank him many times for the fine jewels which he presented me with, but that it is not agreeable to the will and pleasure of my lord, the king of England, that I retain them.' So the knight did as he was directed," continues Froissart ; " but the king of France would not take back the jewels, but gave them to the lord of Mansoe, who thanked the king for them, and had no inclination to refuse them."

During the prevalence of the plague in England, and while London was threatened by that dreadful visitant, Sir Walter exerted himself with great humanity to soothe the sufferings of the people. " It pleased God," says Henrie, " in this dismal time to stir up the heart of this noble knight to have respect to the danger that might fall in the time of this pestilence, then begun in England, if the churches and churchyards in London might not suffice to bury the multitude. Wherefore, he purchased a piece of ground near St John's street, called Spittlecroft, without the bars in West Smithfield, of the master and brethren of St Bartholomew Spittle, containing thirteen acres and a rood, and caused the same to be enclosed and consecrated by Ralph Stratford, bishop of London, at his own proper costs and charges. In which place, in the year following—Stow reports—were buried more than 50,000 persons, as is affirmed by the king's charter, and by an inscription which he read upon a stone cross sometime standing in the Charter-house yard."

In 1360, Sir Walter accompanied the army which Edward led to the gates of Paris, and when it was proposed to withdraw without having measured lances with any part of the garrison, deeming such a thing a disgrace to English chivalry, he requested and obtained permission to make an incursion as far as the barrier ; and he effected his purpose after a long and furious encounter with the Parisian knights. Nine years after this, Sir Walter closed his military services with conducting a destructive inroad from Calais into the heart of France. He then retired to his home in London, where he employed the remaining years of his life in calmly preparing for his last change. He died in 1372, and was buried with great pomp in the cloister of a Carthusian convent founded by himself ; the king himself, and a long train of nobility honoured his funeral with their attendance. He left behind him one only child, a daughter, named Anne, who marrying the earl of Pembroke, transferred to that noble house all the possessions of her family both in England and Hainault.

## Richard II.

BORN A. D. 1365.—DIED A. D. 1399.

It was the great calamity of this worthless ruler, that he became, at the mere age of childhood, to so great an extent his own master. He was not more than eleven when he made, as king of England, his entry into London, amid all the extravagance of splendour and pageantry which characterized the public exhibitions of that age. There were mock castles and turrets, and wine-fountains, and angels offering crowns of gold, and bright maidens scattering golden showers, with all the mirth and madness of popular festivals. Young as he was, it may easily be conceived that so brilliant a display, contrasting so vividly with the sad seclusion of his widowed mother's residence at Sheen, might first kindle within him that taste for show and revelry which disgraced his riper years, and, by oppressing his people with taxation, hastened his destruction. Now, however, his popularity was unbounded. His father, the Black Prince, had supported the cause of good government to the last, and the son, attractive in person and engaging in manner, seemed destined to retrieve the errors which had accompanied the decrepitude of the grandfather. In the following year, his coronation renewed, with added splendour, the popular rejoicings; but the first meeting of parliament was ominous of a troubled reign; and it is exceedingly difficult, amid conflicting authorities and confused statements, to determine the balance of delinquency between faction and misrule. The king's uncles and the king's favourites were at fierce variance, and, while to some of them the quarrel was fatal, none of them came out of the contest unscathed. The middle classes seem to have looked on with an observant eye, and with a shrewd estimate of England's real interests. The Commons' house objected to the expense of the government and the court,—to the system of favouritism,—to the unprofitable cost of the continental fortresses,—and in general, to the entire system of national policy. To these just remonstrances, the only reply seems to have been evasive promises of amendment, accompanied by urgent demands for heavy subsidies. Among other suggestions as to the most expedient mode of raising the supplies, a poll-tax was recommended by the lords; and the commons, in evil hour, consented to the imposition. It was rigorously levied; and the severe exaction, added to the gross misconduct of the collectors, raised the people to almost universal insurrection, and they assembled from the metropolitan counties, on Blackheath, to the amount of not fewer than one hundred thousand men. They gained partial possession of London, surprised the tower, and put to death the archbishop of Canterbury, Sir Robert Hales the 'treasurer,' Legge, one of the farmers of the tax, and several others. In this crisis, Richard—who seems to have been personally popular with the insurgents—behaved with uncommon spirit; notwithstanding the advice of those who dissuaded him from conceding to a set of 'shoeless ribalds,' he boldly presented himself to the furious mob, first at Mile End, and a second time in Smithfield. This last interview was decisive. Wat Tyler, who appears to have

menaced the sovereign, was struck down by Walworth, mayor of London; and Richard, with singular promptitude and address, persuaded the populace to follow him to the fields near Islington, where they hastily dispersed at the appearance of an armed force. The government, relieved from its apprehensions, revoked the amnesty which had been proclaimed, and sent a special commission into the country, with Tresilian at its head, and that worthy prototype of Jefferies is said to have saved himself much trouble by taking accusation as synonymous with guilt. The nation, in fact, seems to have been at this time in a state of strange commotion; and it is easy to perceive from the nature of the doctrines said to have been enforced by some of the public teachers of the day, that the lower orders were roused to a fierce resentment of the encroachments and oppressions of their superiors.

When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who then was the gentleman?

—was the pithy text of one of their favourite preachers; and it affords sufficient indication of the spirit engendered by the circumstances of the time. The wars of Edward, the necessities of the government, and the factions of a weak minority, had taught the people the tremendous lesson of their united strength, though they had not yet learned to systematise their combination. The king's uncles, the majority of them at least, seem to have been ambitious; the motives of the duke of Lancaster are especially questionable, and had he been more successful in war, or more consistent in conduct, he might have effected the highest designs. The strong feeling and bold character of the times are manifest in the works and history of Wickliffe. That ecclesiastical reformer was the precursor of Luther; his intrepid assaillance of hierarchical abuses, and his powerful exhibition of evangelical truth, entitle him to the fame both of a confessor and a discoverer.

But if, in the early deeds of Richard, there was somewhat of promise, it was not sustained by his after-actions. He attached himself to favourites, and the old historians describe circumstances of indecency that give reason to doubt the purity of his regard. He was passionate to folly, and betrayed a large measure of that vindictive disposition which seems to have been hereditary in his family. His domestic expenditure was a mad exhibition of ultra-extravagance; and his personal vanity was gratified at a reckless cost. He set the Commons at defiance—"he would not displace the meanest scullion in his kitchen, for their pleasure." At length this reached the point beyond which endurance was cowardice, and he was compelled to submit for a season; but with the fixed purpose of re-asserting and avenging at a more convenient time his violated dignity. His chief favourite, who had by an act of insulting profligacy, excited the indignation of the duke of Gloucester, one of the king's uncles, inflamed the resentment of the monarch, and the duke's life was endangered. The king summoned his militia, and the barons armed their retainers, and the people sided with the nobles. Richard and his councillors shrunk from the unequal contest; he was compelled to dismiss his obnoxious minions, and for a moment stood in peril of deposition. The struggle between despotism and insubordination did not, however, go this length, and the king was again



placed under tutelage; but the duke of Gloucester abused his triumph by acts of unrelenting cruelty: the parliament, which seconded his designs, obtained from some the distinctive epithet 'merciless,' though others exalted it by the doubtful appellation 'wonderful.' Richard's cousin, Henry of Lancaster, earl of Derby, son of John of Gaunt, and nephew of the duke of Gloucester, although one of the insurgent lords, and mainly concerned in defeating the king's array, opposed these sanguinary proceedings.

In 1389, however, Richard, by a bold and decisive step, re-assumed his authority, and reigned for some years in comparative tranquillity. But his vindictive spirit had never forgiven the injuries of former years, and in 1397, under forms which were a mere mockery of judgment, he procured the impeachment and condemnation of the more obnoxious of his opponents, and among these the earl of Arundel was beheaded, and the duke of Gloucester secretly murdered. The atrocity of this act was enhanced by the treachery which prepared the way for its execution. The king himself, with coward craft, decoyed his uncle, under fair pretences, from his house at Pleshy, and drew him into an ambuscade. But the very steps which were designed for the advancement of his authority became the precursors of his fall. His impolitic barbarity roused the general indignation, and a feeling of insecurity agitated the minds of some of his most powerful nobles. A conversation—of which the particulars are on record, but the true character of which it is not now possible to ascertain—between Henry, earl of Derby, lately made duke of Hereford, and Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, led to consequences which deprived Richard of his crown. Both those powerful noblemen were banished, but Hereford was too popular to be offended with impunity: his partisans were active in his cause, and during the king's absence in Ireland the duke returned from France, and a formidable army soon collected round his standard. The intelligence was late in reaching Richard, and after receiving it he lingered in Ireland till his cause was lost. He landed at last in Wales, and took refuge in the strong castle of Conway. From this asylum he was drawn by the persuasions of the earl of Northumberland, and brought into the presence of Henry, who spoke him fair, but transferred him to safe custody. A few days brought these transactions to a termination, Richard signed his resignation, and Henry of Bolingbroke assumed the state and title of King of England. The instrument of deposition bears date September 29, 1399.<sup>1</sup>

## Thomas, Duke of Gloucester.

DIED A. D. 1357.

IN the first parliament held after Richard's Scottish campaign, Thomas of Woodstock, earl of Buckingham, was rewarded by his nephew with the dukedom of Gloucester, but the gift was too small for the inordinate ambition of the man. The absence of his elder brother, the duke of Lancaster, in Portugal, afforded him a favourable oppor-

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 416.

tunity for grasping at the chief ascendancy in the councils of the young prince. The earls of Warwick, Arundel, Nottingham, and Derby, attached themselves to Gloucester's party, and the first object which the new faction aimed at was the establishment of a permanent council, similar to that which for a time overawed John, Henry III., and Edward II. Richard at first resisted these attempts with becoming spirit, and threatened to dissolve the parliament which entertained Gloucester's proposals, but was at last compelled to yield a reluctant assent to the establishment of a commission with power to inquire into the conduct of the officers in his household and courts of law, and generally to correct abuses, wherever existing in any department of the government, by such remedies as might appear to them 'good and profitable.'<sup>1</sup> The duke was of the number, and of course headed the commission. His first victim was the chancellor De La Pole, earl of Suffolk, one of Richard's minions, who was accused of having obtained from the king grants beyond his deserts, of having enriched himself by defrauding the crown, "as for paying," says Speed, "to the king's coffers but twentie marks yearly for a fee farm, whereof himself received threescore and ten," and of having put the great seal to illegal charters and pardons. Against these charges De La Pole was ably defended by his brother-in-law, Sir Richard Scroop, but his judges pronounced some of the charges proved, and the chancellor was punished by fine and imprisonment. Irritated by these and other proceedings of his uncle, Richard appealed to arms, but the confederates had foreseen and were prepared for this issue. At the head of 40,000 men, the duke of Gloucester marched upon London, and in the audience which Richard found himself compelled to grant, boldly appealed—according to the phrase of the time—the king's chief favourites, namely, De Vere, duke of Ireland, De La Pole, the archbishop of York, the chief justice Tresilian, and Sir Nicholas Bramber. Suffolk fled to the continent; the duke of Ireland into Wales; the prelate obtained shelter and concealment in the north. De Vere raised the royal standard in Cheshire, and the king secretly sanctioned the measure, while Gloucester eagerly availed himself of this circumstance to inquire of the learned in the law whether there were not circumstances which might release a vassal from the fealty and homage which he had sworn to his sovereign, and in a meeting at Huntingdon agreed with the earls of Arundel and Warwick, and the lord Thomas Mortimer, "to depose Richard, and take the crown under his own custody." Whatever may have been Gloucester's ultimate intention, it was defeated by the well-judged opposition of the earls of Derby and Nottingham. But disappointed in his main object, the series of impeachments, trials, and executions, which followed the defeat and dispersion of the king's party, amply gratified Gloucester's revenge, who seemed determined to annihilate every friend that the evil fortunes of his nephew had left him in his adversity. Among these there was none whom greater efforts were made to save, and who was more worthy of them, than Sir Simon Burley, who had been Richard's guardian by the appointment of his gallant father, and whom the young king and his queen regarded with filial affection. Richard earnestly solicited

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 375.

his uncle to spare him; and the queen, on her knees, seconded the entreaties of her husband; but nothing could move the 'flinty-hearted Gloucester,' and in a few weeks this 'gentle knight,' as Froissart calls him, was led forth to execution, without the previous formality of obtaining the king's assent having been complied with.

It was at a general council held after Easter, 1389, that Richard, by a bold and decisive step, suddenly emancipated himself from the thralldom in which Gloucester had long held him. During the deliberations of this council, the king suddenly required the duke of Gloucester to tell him his age. "Your highness," returned the duke, "is in your twenty-second year." "Then," said Richard, "I am old enough to manage my own affairs. It is not fitting that I should remain longer under the control of tutors than any ward in my dominions. I thank ye, my lords, for your past services, but shall not require them any longer." The council was immediately dismissed; Gloucester, finding no one prepared to resist so unexpected a blow, departed from court in sullen discontent, and although Richard seemed not unwilling to conciliate his uncle, the latter disdained to cultivate the friendship of his nephew, and made himself the soul of every faction that opposed the king's wishes. Once, indeed, he affected a wish to retire from the kingdom and join the Christians in their crusade against the idolaters of Prussia, but he so easily allowed himself to be turned aside from the design, that it was pretty evident he never seriously contemplated it. Avarice at this period was one of the besetting passions of the great, and Gloucester shared in this vice too. He was, says Froissart, "cunning and malicious, and continually soliciting favours of King Richard, and pleading poverty though he abounded in wealth; for he was constable of England, duke of Gloucester, earl of Buckingham, Essex, and Northampton, and enjoyed, besides, pensions from the king's exchequer to the amount of 4,000 rubles a-year. And he would not exert himself in any way," adds the worthy chronicler, "if he were not well paid." This passion proved a fertile source of trouble both to Gloucester himself and his nephew. The marriage of Henry of Lancaster to the younger sister and co-heiress of Gloucester's duchess, whose father, the earl of Stafford, was one of the richest noblemen in England, was a sad blow to Gloucester's avaricious hopes. "The duke," observes Froissart, "had no inclination to laugh when he heard of the projected match, for it would now be necessary to divide an inheritance which he considered wholly as his own. When he learned that both his brothers had been concerned in this matter, he became melancholy, and never afterwards loved the duke of Lancaster as he had hitherto done." Richard, as we have seen, did much to gratify his uncle's propensity, but failed to quench his thirst for riches. He purchased his consent to a matrimonial alliance between the royal families of England and France at a high price, and seemed prepared even for farther sacrifices to his relative, had not the latter by conduct nothing short of infatuation, drawn upon his own head the resentment of his nephew. The style of language in which the duke dared to indulge himself in the presence of his sovereign is well illustrated in the following narrative from Grafton. The duke of Bretagne on repaying a loan which he had obtained from the king of England, demanded restitution of the town



and haven of Brest which he had impledged in security for the repayment. Richard resigned the town upon the fulfilment of the stipulated terms; but Gloucester hesitated not to condemn his nephew's conduct in this instance as weak and impolitic, and even charged him in the hearing of some disbanded soldiers with timidly resigning what he ought to have retained by force of arms rather than have relinquished. Richard stung by the reflection, and scarcely imagining that he heard aright, exclaimed, "What is it you say, uncle?" The duke repeated the offensive words, whereupon the insulted and indignant prince passionately rejoined, "Think you that I am either a fool or a merchant, to sell my land? No! by John Baptist, no! But our cousin, the duke of Bretagne, having paid the sum for which his town and haven were impledged to me, both honour and conscience require that I should restore it." The historian informs us that the duke's rude speech made a strong impression upon Richard's mind, and that he hated his insolent relative ever after "for the brand of cowardice he had cast upon him." Richard's friends marked and cherished the prince's growing disgust, and reports were soon circulated that the duke meditated to seize and imprison the king, and place the earl of March upon the throne. Richard now adopted vigorous and decisive steps against his disaffected uncle. He obtained the sanction of both the dukes of York and Lancaster for the arrest of Gloucester, and personally headed the party appointed to apprehend him. After enjoying his uncle's hospitality at Pleshy, he invited his unsuspecting relative to accompany him on his return to London, but instantly delivered him over to the custody of the earl marshal, who conveyed the duke to Calais where he was lodged in the castle. The duke and his associates were now made to experience the same bitter fate and hard dealing to which they had so often subjected others. They were appealed of treason by the earls of Kent, Huntingdon, Salisbury, Sir William Seroop, and others; and their trial was fixed for the ensuing parliament.<sup>2</sup> On the 21st of September, 1357, a writ was issued to the earl marshal, commanding him to bring the body of his prisoner to answer in parliament to the appeal of treason against him. Three days thereafter an answer was returned that the prisoner was dead. Strong suspicions were entertained of foul play in the case, but the lords appellants demanded judgment, and the duke was declared a traitor.<sup>3</sup>

"In the first year of the next reign," says Lingard, "a paper was read in parliament, purporting to be a confession upon oath of John Hall, a servant to the earl of Nottingham (the earl marshal). He said, or was made to say, that, some day in September, the duke was brought from the castle of Calais to a hotel called the Prince's Inn, and delivered to two persons, servants of the king, and the earl of Rutland. That they took him up stairs, advised him to send for a confessor, as he must die, and, after the departure of the priest, smothered him between two beds, in presence of himself and three others. As soon as this paper had been read, Hall was condemned, and immediately executed without having been heard, or even presented before his judges. Though eight persons were named in the deposition, as being concerned in the transaction, none of them were examined or molested. If we reflect how much it was for

<sup>2</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 374, 440—452.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 378.

the interest of Henry IV. to have Richard believed the author of Gloucester's death, all these circumstances tend to excite a suspicion that he could not prove it."<sup>4</sup> Froissart's words are: "As I was informed, when he had dined, and was about to have washen his hands, there came into the chamber four men, and cast suddenly a towell about the duke's neck, and drew so sore that he fell to the earth, and so they strangled him, and closed his eyes. And when he was dead they despoiled him, and bare him to his bed, and laid him between the sheets naked, and then they issued out of the chamber into the hall and said openly how a palsy had taken the duke of Gloucester, and so he died. These words were abroad in the town of Calais: some believed them—some not."<sup>5</sup> There is little historical evidence to shelter the king from the charge of having procured his uncle's death. It would have been easy to have laid such information before parliament as would have exculpated Richard, had any such existed; it was eminently for the king's interest that he should be freed from the general suspicion which Gloucester's death in the time and place of it excited; but it is certain that nothing of the kind was attempted, and the legitimate conclusion is that Richard found it impossible to disguise his villany by any other means than that of enveloping the whole transaction in mystery.

### Sir John Holand.

DIED A. D. 1400.

SIR JOHN HOLAND, a knight renowned for his chivalrous exploits, but infamous for his cold-blooded assassinations, was the uterine brother of Richard. His mother, the princess of Wales, had for her first husband Sir Thomas Holand, who, in right of his wife, was created earl of Kent and Lord Wake of Liddel. She bore him two sons, Thomas Holand, who inherited the honours of his father, and John, the subject of this memoir, afterwards created earl of Huntingdon and duke of Exeter. This monster in human shape was known to have strangled with his own hands a Carmelite friar, who had presented to the king a written paper containing the particulars of a conspiracy alleged to have been formed against him by the duke of Lancaster, and who had been committed to his charge for future examination. Richard drove the assassin from his presence, but was afterwards prevailed upon, through the intercession of his mother, to grant him a full pardon.<sup>1</sup> Within the space of one year, Sir John again disgraced the knightly character by perpetrating another base assassination. One of his esquires had been killed in a brawl by an archer belonging to the earl of Stafford. When informed of the incident, Sir John swore in his wrath that he would neither eat nor drink until he had avenged it, and he kept his vow by plunging his dagger into the bosom of Lord Stafford's son, whom he accidentally encountered a short time afterwards. When informed of his victim's name and rank, he exclaimed, "Be it so! I had rather have put him to death than one of less rank, for by that I have better avenged the loss of my squire." The unfortunate

<sup>4</sup> Vol. iii. p. 246.

<sup>5</sup> Berner's Froiss. ii. c. 226.

<sup>1</sup> Rym. vii. 46.

father loudly demanded justice on the murderer, while the queen-mother again attempted to mediate in his favour; but Richard confiscated the property of the assassin, and declared that he would certainly cause him to be hanged if he ever left the sanctuary of St John of Beverley. In a few days the unhappy mother died of grief, and softened, perhaps, by this fatal catastrophe, Richard again issued a pardon to his guilty relative, who was soon afterwards married to the second daughter of the duke of Lancaster.

The commission of these atrocities, however, did not eclipse the fame of this warlike knight, who made himself known and dreaded wherever he had an opportunity of breaking a lance or wielding a battle-axe, whether in tournament or mortal combat. While in Spain with his father-in-law, a herald arrived at his quarters with a letter from Sir Reginald de Roye, a gallant French knight in the service of the king of Castile, in which he entreated Sir John, "for the love of his mistress, that he would deliver him from his vow by tilting with him three courses with the lance, three attacks with the sword, three with the battle-axe, and three with the dagger. The challenger at the same time offered his antagonist the choice of the place of combat. When Sir John Holand," continues Froissart, "had perused this letter, he smiled, and looking at the herald, said, 'Friend, thou art welcome, for thou hast brought me what pleases me much, and I accept the challenge. Thou wilt remain in my lodging with my people, and in the course of to-morrow thou shalt have my answer whether the tilts are to be in Galicia or Castile.' The herald replied, 'God grant it!' Sir John went to the duke of Lancaster and showed the letter the herald had brought. 'Well,' said the duke, 'and have you accepted it?' 'Yes, by my faith, have I! And why not? I love nothing better than fighting, and the knight entreats me to indulge him; consider, therefore, where you would choose it should take place.'" The combat took place at Entença, and Sir John gained great applause by his gallantry in the jousts. On many other occasions Sir John distinguished himself as a right valiant and skilful knight, and gained the meed of gallantry from all who witnessed his deeds; his foul murders appear to have little affected his reputation amongst the gentle lords and ladies of that chivalrous age. With the fall of Richard the hopes of the Howlands fell also, and they eagerly entered into Salisbury's conspiracy for seizing the person of King Henry at Windsor castle. On the failure of that bold scheme, the earl of Huntingdon fled to the coast of Essex, where he fell into the hands of the late duke of Gloucester's vassals, who instantly revenged their master's death—in which they with justice, perhaps, regarded him as having been an active instrument—by beheading him with an axe.

## John, Earl of Salisbury.

DIED A. D. 1400.

ONE of the leaders in the first and most formidable conspiracy which was formed against Henry, after he had gained the summit of his ambition, was John de Montacute, earl of Salisbury, one of the most



accomplished noblemen of the age. In Henry's first parliament, Thomas, Lord Morley, had charged Salisbury in very coarse terms, with the crime of treason to both the late and the present king, and especially with having instigated Richard to some of his most unpopular measures; Salisbury indignantly repelled the accusation, but narrowly escaped a traitor's doom, with the loss only of those honours with which his services had been rewarded in the preceding reign. Lingard remarks it as a singular circumstance, that although the earl was called upon for his defence, in common with the other lords who had advised and framed the appeal of treason against the duke of Gloucester, yet he was unnoticed in the judgment of the lords:<sup>1</sup> this may have resulted from Henry's strong personal dislike to Salisbury, who had early rendered himself peculiarly offensive to him, by his undertaking the mission which Richard despatched to Charles VI., with the view of breaking off the match betwixt Henry and the daughter of the duke of Berri. It was he, too, who had headed the levies which opposed a feeble resistance to Henry's march to the throne; and he continued to exhibit an attachment to his deposed master, more grateful than prudent, even after Henry had fairly seated himself on the throne. On the imprisonment of Richard, the lords who had appealed Gloucester of treason, entered into a conspiracy for his restoration; but the plot was revealed by the earl of Rutland, to whom they had incautiously communicated their secret, and the conspirators found themselves compelled hastily to raise the standard of rebellion. Having been joined by Lord Lumley, the earls of Kent and Salisbury imprudently took up their quarters in the town of Cirencester, apart from their troops, whom they posted in the adjacent fields. The inhabitants of that town were well affected to Henry, and suddenly invested the quarters of the nobles in the night with a large force. The earls defended themselves for the space of three hours; but were at last obliged to surrender, and conducted as prisoners to the abbey. On the following evening a fire took place in the city, and the populace, supposing that it was designed to draw off their attention from their prisoners, and attempt their rescue, rushed in a body to the place of their confinement, dragged them forth into the street, and instantly beheaded them. Thus fell the earl of Salisbury, Richard's favourite minister, one of the most learned and accomplished nobles of his age, a patron of literature and himself a poet. His poems have unfortunately perished; but, from the testimony of Christina of Pisa, a lady celebrated in the annals of French literature, they appear to have been worthy of his rank and accomplishments. She used to call the earl, "*Gracieux chevalier, aiment dictier, et lui-même gracieux dicteur.*" Walsingham, narrating the circumstances of his death, says, "He who throughout his life had been a favourer of Lollards, a despiser of images, a contemner of the canons, and a derider of sacraments, ended his days, as is reported, without the sacrament of confession."<sup>2</sup> The earl perhaps enjoyed something more consoling than the sacraments of the church in his last moments. He had always been a steady supporter of the reformed doctrines, had caused the idols and symbols of superstitious worship to be removed from his private chapel, and had never shrunk from the most open and public declaration of his religious sentiments.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III. p. 277.<sup>2</sup> P. 363.

## Sir William Walworth.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1380.

THE name of Sir William Walworth, to whose bold heart and ready hand Richard II. probably owed not his crown only but his life, first appears upon record as one of the merchants of London whom the commons appointed treasurers to receive the monies arising from the new aid granted by Richard's first parliament. In the year of Wat Tyler's rebellion, he held the office of mayor of the city, and on the approach of the arch-rebel to Smithfield, at the head of twenty thousand men, he accompanied the young prince while endeavouring to make terms in person with the insurgents. The king's party consisted of only sixty persons, and the Kentish leader, on perceiving their approach, made a sign to his followers to halt, and boldly rode up to the king whom he addressed with his usual confidence. The extravagance of the rebel's demands, prompted by the consciousness of power, and the conciliatory proposals made to him, occasioned some hesitation; and while Richard held a brief consultation with his friends as to what was best to be done in existing circumstances, the Tyler affected to play with his dagger, tossing it from hand to hand, and at last laid his hand on the bridle of the king's horse.<sup>1</sup> The insult, with whatever view it was offered, roused the indignation of the loyal and stout-hearted mayor, who, with a rashness infinitely more dangerous to his sovereign than the Tyler's presumption, sprung forward, and plunged his short sword into the rebel's throat, who, on receiving the wound, spurred his horse, and rode about a dozen yards before he fell to the ground, when he was instantly despatched by Robert Standish one of the king's esquires. The insurgents, who witnessed the transaction, drew their bows, and were about to pour a shower of arrows upon the king's party, when Richard rescued himself and his attendants from their imminent peril, by an act of uncommon bravery and presence of mind. Galloping up to the archers, he exclaimed, "What are ye doing, my lieges? Tyler was a traitor! follow me, I will be your leader." The discontented host moved on mechanically at the bidding of their new chief, until they reached the fields at Islington, where Walworth again appeared for the protection of his sovereign, but at the head of an efficient force of one thousand men-at-arms. For these good services, Richard knighted the redoubtable mayor, and bestowed upon him a pension of one hundred pounds per annum.

## Sir John Philpot.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1380.

CONTEMPORARY with Sir William Walworth was John Philpot, alderman and citizen of London, whose heroic exploits deserve more ample and frequent commemoration in the pages of our historians than

<sup>1</sup> Knyht, 2637.—Froiss. lvii—lxii.

they have yet obtained. In the early part of Richard's reign, the French were allowed to land on various parts of the English coast, and commit great devastations on the unprotected towns and villages. Encouraged by his knowledge of the defenceless state of the place, one Mercer, a Scottish adventurer, entered the port of Scarborough, and carried away the merchant vessels that lay there, and soon made himself so formidable on the English coast, that the king and council were petitioned to adopt instant measures for his capture. But the government regarded the application with indifference, and Mercer was allowed to continue his ravages with impunity, until Philpot undertook to do at his own expense and risk what the ministry would not do in the public service. He fitted out some ships, and placing on board of them an armament of one thousand men, boldly sailed in quest of the daring pirate, whom he soon encountered, and, after a smart action, captured with his whole fleet, consisting of the ships which he had taken at Scarborough, and fifteen Spanish vessels laden with spoil. He then sailed triumphantly to London with his prizes, and received an enthusiastic welcome from his brother-citizens and the populace. But the council of regency beheld his success and his reception with a jealous eye; and the earl of Stafford even went so far as to charge this loyal and gallant subject of the crown with the commission of an illegal act, in presuming to levy forces, and pursue war within the king's dominions without the sovereign's permission. But Philpot repelled the unworthy accusation with so much spirit and firmness, that the prosecution was abandoned, and he received an honourable acquittal. "Few memorials," says the fair historian of the wars of York and Lancaster, "remain to perpetuate the remembrance of Philpot's glorious action. A narrow lane in the city of London which bears his name, we are told by Stow, has derived its appellation from the residence of this distinguished ornament of the aldermanic body; but the tongue of fame has not blazoned its origin, and it is daily pronounced without any reminiscence of the hero who so justly deserves the admiration and esteem of all posterity."

## Sir Richard Whittington.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1390.

OUR juvenile readers at least would never forgive us were we to pass over in silence so eminent a name as that of Sir Richard Whittington, 'thrice lord-mayor of London,' while enumerating those of a Walworth and a Philpot. That Sir Richard Whittington was really lord-mayor of London for three successive periods, is matter of record, but we are not so satisfactorily informed of the circumstances of his rise and progress to the civic chair, and least of all do we possess any credible monuments from which we can illustrate the life and adventures of his far-famed cat. Sir Richard, at his death, founded a college, on which he bestowed his own name, and from the ordinances of this foundation we learn that he was the son of Sir William Whittington, knight. A descent such as this strips our lord-mayor's history of much of its romantic character, and compels us, unwillingly, to cast discredit upon



‘the pretty and useful fable of the cat,’ for it can hardly be supposed that a knight’s son could be indebted to so humble a coadjutor for his first advancement in the world. It is probable that family influence, or the venality of Richard’s court, laid the foundations of Whittington’s wealth and honours. In the charter of Whittington college, the members are directed to remember in their prayers for ever, ‘Richard II. and Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, special lords and promoters of the said Richard Whittington.’ This circumstance, taken in connexion with some others to be mentioned presently, has suggested to Miss Roberts the following ingenious piece of conjectural biography:—“The family of Whittington was settled in the north of England, that is, in the vicinity of the pit-coal counties and sea-ports. At the date when we may suppose Whittington a boy, the burning of pit-coal in London was esteemed so great a nuisance, that those who ventured to consume the prohibited fuel were rendered punishable under the statute with the penalty of death; and that the actual enforcement of this statute took place, is evinced by the record of the execution of individuals for this offence, still preserved among the archives of the tower of London. But notwithstanding the severity of such a law, and the proof that at one period at least, all its severity was rigorously executed, we come down as low as the year 1419, before which time Whittington had served all his three several mayoralties, without finding that a repeal of the statute had taken place. The importation of pit-coal formed a considerable branch of the commerce of the Thames. ‘As early,’ says the author of the history of Newcastle, ‘as 1421, it appears that it was a trade of great importance, and that a duty of two-pence per chaldron had been imposed upon it for some time.’ Now, to account for this professed and public sanction of a trade which was still prohibited by law, it is only needful to advert to that dispensory power which the English crown so notoriously assumed in this and other periods of its early history, and by means of which the operation of the law was arbitrarily suspended, abrogated, or qualified.” Miss Roberts proceeds to argue ingeniously enough, that such especial dispensation may have been granted to Sir Richard by ‘his special lords and promoters,’ and that a monopoly of the London coal trade with Newcastle was the real source of his splendid civic fortunes.<sup>1</sup> As to the story of the cat, it seems sufficiently safe to the fair historian—whose guidance we have adopted in this article—to follow a distinguished antiquary, in the belief that the story of ‘Whittington and his Cat’ is no more than a London version of a Persian story mentioned by Sir William Ouseley.

## Henry IV.

BORN A. D. 1367.—DIED A. D. 1413.

THE conqueror of Richard ascended the throne amid the acclamations of the people, in the first ardours of a popularity too violent to be otherwise than dangerous. The weak and reckless character of

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of York and Lancaster*, vol. i. p. 169.

the late king had excited an indignation little less than universal, and the able and enterprising Bolingbroke availed himself to the utmost of the advantages afforded him by the misgovernment of his predecessor. His title to the crown was indirect, or rather it was entirely superseded by the existence of a superior claim in the person of Mortimer, earl of March, lineally descended from Lionel, the elder brother of Henry's father. In his address to parliament, challenging the crown, after the public declaration of Richard's forfeiture, he blended with his artfully expressed assertion of hereditary succession, an obscure but significant reference to the right of conquest. At his coronation, too, he seems to have intended an allusion to this double claim, by 'the sword of Lancaster,' which was borne naked on his left hand by the earl of Northumberland, and by the holy oil, preserved from the time of Becket, and given—so ran the legend—to that prelate by the Virgin Mary. The meeting of the new parliament afforded no favourable omen; the debate among the peers was stormy; accusations fiercely made, and as fiercely recriminated; the lie given and thrown back; no fewer than forty gauntlets, gages of personal defiance, flung down and taken up. Such were the lordly courtesies which distinguished this memorable sitting. Conspiracies, as might have been anticipated, were soon in agitation, and a formidable attempt was made to surprise Henry at the castle of Windsor. Failing in this *coup-de-main*, the noblemen, who were concerned in the plot, endeavoured to rouse the people of the kingdom to arm for the liberation of Richard; but the popular feeling was, as yet, on the usurper's side, and the insurgents were seized by the municipal authorities, and executed by summary process.<sup>1</sup> This ill-advised and disastrous scheme sealed the fate of the abdicated monarch, and, in the month of January, 1400, his death was announced as having taken place in the castle of Pontefract. Considerable doubt exists concerning the manner of 'his taking off.' It was reported that from the hour in which he was apprized of the execution of his two brothers, who had taken part in the insurrection, he refused all food. This rumour, however, gained small credence, and it was more commonly believed that the abstinence was not voluntary, but forced. Another account gives the details of a more violent murder, and ascribes the death of Richard, after a strenuous defence, to the hand of Sir Piers d'Exton; but if there be no error in the statement of facts connected with the opening of his tomb some years back, this cannot be true, as the skull, where the disabling blow is said to have been struck, was found without sign of injury.<sup>2</sup>

In the same year, Henry invaded Scotland, but the Scotch army retired before his armament, and he failed to take the castle of Edinburgh. If, however, he obtained no military honours on this occasion, he gained the noble fame, rare in those days, of humanity and maintenance of discipline in war: no ravages, no violations, no fires, nor massacres, marked the line of his march, and protection was uniformly afforded to the quiet and submissive. In the following seasons, however, the old system of foray was resumed by the commanders on either side, until, in September, 1402, the battle of Homildon-hill, fought by the Scots, under Douglas, against the English, under the

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl. iv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Archæol. vol. vi.

Percies and the earl of March, gave a decided superiority to the latter. In that singular fight, the men-at-arms, on the side of the Southrons, never charged; it was gained by the archers alone. Ordered by Percy to descend into the low ground between two hills, occupied by the hostile divisions, their discharge was so galling as to provoke Douglas and his chivalry to a forward movement, before which they retired, occasionally facing about, and checking the Scottish horse by a close and destructive stream of arrows.<sup>3</sup> Douglas and the bravest of his companions fell in the charge, covered with wounds; and the loss in slain and in prisoners of rank, was exceedingly heavy.

But these were tame and uninteresting occurrences compared with the events which, in 1403, placed Henry in jeopardy of his throne. In the struggle with Richard, the earl of Northumberland and his son, the gallant Hotspur, had given themselves implicitly to the Lancastrian cause, and it is not improbable that their accession may have been decisive of its success. The king had not been ungrateful: he appears to have lavished honours and possessions on the Percies, and to have invariably treated them with an honourable confidence. Their manifesto, or 'Defiance,' though evidently a laboured document, has less the air of deeply felt grievance, than of previously formed determination to quarrel, and matter of justification subsequently sought.<sup>4</sup> It is not unlikely that the success of Henry had kindled the ambition of these noblemen, and that the brilliant victory of Homildon-hill gave edge and resolution to their malcontenty. Be this, however, as it may, their measures were skilfully planned; their strategy was prudent and bold; and their tactics, in the battle which ensued, long held victory in suspense. The earl of Northumberland formed an alliance with the Scots and with the Welsh, who were then, under Owen Glendower, struggling for independence. Joined by Douglas and his retainers, Hotspur, at the head of his border veterans, moved, by rapid marches, upon Wales, and on the road formed a junction with his uncle, the earl of Worcester, who had raised a strong division of archers in Cheshire. The crisis was appalling, but Henry's genius and courage were equal to the emergency. With the prince of Wales he hastened towards the north; but on ascertaining the movements of the insurgents, he changed the direction of his columns, and threw himself athwart Percy's line of march at Shrewsbury, which he entered just in time to prevent the entrance of the enemies' advanced guard. The numbers on either side were nearly equal,—the troops of excellent quality,—the commanders of high reputation,—and the stake at once the greatest and the last. The king offered terms of peace; they were refused, and the battle began. The Northumbrians held a strong position, and at the first assault the royal forces recoiled. Eager to take advantage of this success, Percy and Douglas both charged at the same moment on Henry's personal guard. The immediate effect was terrific. The royal standard-bearer was killed, with several knights around the king, who is said to have been himself unhorsed by Douglas. Bravely, however, did the monarch fight, and bravely was he seconded by his gallant son: the first slew, as stated in the records of the time, thirty-six men-at-arms with his own hand; and the second was wounded in

<sup>3</sup> Otterb. 237.—Ford. xv. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Harding apud 'The Hereditary right of the Crown.'



the face. At length Hotspur fell, and his followers gave way. Subsequent insurrections of the same party were easily suppressed, and with the fall of the powerful and ambitious family of Percy, the only formidable opponency to the house of Lancaster disappeared.

Henry's principal political annoyances were now the Cambrian war, kept up by the active and intrepid Glendower, and the hostility of France, whose generals made frequent inroads on the continental dependencies of the English crown, and landed with flying corps in various parts of England and Wales. These insults at length roused the anger of the king, and, in 1412, an English army landed in Normandy; but, after some negotiation, retired to Guienne.<sup>5</sup> But there were other sources of deeper vexation than any that could arise from exterior circumstances, which pressed heavily upon Henry's feelings towards the close of his reign. It was not long after his successes against the Northumberland party, that he became afflicted with an eruptive disease, described as a 'detestable leprosy,' and confining its visitations to the face. In addition to this troublesome, and probably painful affection, he was subject to epileptic attacks; and these manifestations of constitutional disorder gave him, to early as in his forty-sixth year, the aspect and infirmities of premature old age. His mind, however, preserved its elasticity, and he retained to the last his firm grasp of the sceptre, although there are appearances of unsettled purpose, and labouring conscience, in the closing scenes of his existence. The final summons found him on his knees before the shrine of St Edward, in Westminster abbey. He was conveyed to the abbot's chamber, and breathed his last, March, 20th, 1413, in the fourteenth year of his reign.

The general character of this brave and politic chief may be inferred from the intimations already given; but there is one prominent feature of his administration—the systematic persecution of every religious opinion, that might offer menace to the usurpations of Rome—which has not yet been noticed, but which demands the severest reprobation, as disgraceful to his memory, and requires examination, on account of its marked deviation from the usual liberality of his government. The princes of the house of Lancaster, mainly, it is probable, through consciousness of defect in their title to the crown, affected an unusual regard to popular rights; and instances might be given, of concession, both verbal and practical, very much at issue with the then fashionable notions concerning the origin and extent of kingly power. Yet, in contravention of this sagacious and successful policy, Henry is found eager and sanguinary in the endeavour to suppress sentiments, of which the circulation had been aided, directly by his father's policy, indirectly by his own. The preaching of the fearless and enlightened Wickliffe had not been in vain; it had awakened a spirit of inquiry and a temper of opposition, which halts and faggots may partially restrain, but must fail in the effort to extinguish. It may be admitted that Henry had powerful motives for complaisance toward the hierarchy. A defective title, and an imperfect hold upon the attachment of the nobles, were in themselves enough to stimulate the restless vigilance of an usurper, and to call forth the utmost energies of a determined and

<sup>5</sup> Monstrelet.

unscrupulous ruler; nor would it have been less than political insanity, to have neglected any fair means of conciliating the priesthood, whose support to the cause of the malcontents might have turned the scale. But there was a safe and honourable medium: his own convictions were probably in opposition to the new doctrines, and, politically speaking, he could not have been blamed for the fair exercise of his influence, in behalf of the dominant system; beyond this he could not go, without deeply offending those to whom it behoved him to be most cautious of giving offence—the people of England, of whom the larger and better portion were, if not adverse to Romanism, abhorrent of blood. Unmoved, however, by these considerations, and preferring violence to discretion, he enforced extreme measures, and obtained for them the sanction of a parliamentary enactment. The statute *de Heretico comburendo* was passed early in his reign,<sup>6</sup> and it was not suffered to remain a dead letter. William Sautre, priest of St Osyth's, London, was the first victim to this detestable abuse of legislation.<sup>7</sup> It is somewhat difficult to account for the subserviency of parliament in this matter, since the house of commons at least, appears to have been disposed to treat the sacerdocy with very slight ceremony. The speaker was instructed, in one instance, to make urgent remonstrances against the immunity from regular taxation enjoyed by the hierarchy; but the peers supported the ecclesiastics, and the archbishop of Canterbury assumed a high tone on the occasion. "If I live," said that prelate, addressing the speaker, "thou shalt have hot taking away any thing that I have."<sup>8</sup> The primate, Arundel, was proud and pitiless, and it was probably at his instigation, that measures of such outrageous severity were adopted. It may be farther suggested, in extenuation of conduct which does not admit of direct defence, that Henry with all his shrewdness and energy, seems never to have succeeded in establishing a government intrinsically strong. His foreign policy appears to have been feeble and wavering; and there are indications which may justify the suspicion that his civil administration was, from whatever cause, not always equal to the exigences of the time.

In his reign, however, the immunities and authority of the commons house of parliament assumed a consistency and independence, which began to give a new character to the government of England. The constitution of the house was essentially improved, by provisions for the freedom of elections, and by an important abridgment of the frequently abused power of the sheriff. An unceasing jealousy was manifested towards all attempts to restrain the liberty of debate, and the then necessarily extensive privilege of security from arrest was firmly maintained. The same determination was exhibited in the dispute concerning the registration of parliamentary proceedings, which had been heretofore effected always negligently, and sometimes abusively. Henry resisted their requisition of a fair and equitable process of verification, but they persisted until the concession was made. They were, moreover, sternly vigilant over the fiscal measures of the court; and their conduct, altogether, illustrates the steady progress that Englishmen were making, in the knowledge and maintenance of their political rights.

<sup>6</sup> Rot. Parl. III. 465.

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.*

<sup>8</sup> *Historical.*

## Edmund Mortimer, Earl of March.

DIED A. D. 1425.

THE house of Lancaster, in the person of Henry, had now reached the summit of its ambition; but there existed—as we have already hinted—a formidable competitor, whose claims rested on the principle of hereditary succession. Had this principle been allowed to regulate the high transactions of state, on the deposition of Richard, the crown would have devolved on the posterity of Lionel, duke of Clarence, the second son of Edward III. By the decease of that prince without male issue, his rights fell to his daughter, Philippa, who had married Roger Mortimer, earl of March, the male representative of the powerful baron who was attainted and executed for the murder of Edward II. The forfeited earldom had been regained by Roger's son, who, in the 26th of Edward III., obtained a reversal of the judgment against his parent, and thenceforth bore the title of earl of March. His son and successor, Edmund, worthily supported his high rank, by his splendid services in France and Ireland; and, by his marriage with Philippa of Clarence, transmitted the rightful claim to the crown of England to his descendants. Roger Mortimer, the fourth in descent from the regicide, succeeded his father in the government of Ireland. He was a knight of great personal accomplishments, and celebrated for the magnificence of his household, and the reckless gaiety of his life. In a combat with the sept of O'Brien, his headlong valour distanced his followers, and, fighting in the disguise of an Irish horseman, he was overpowered by numbers, and torn to pieces by his savage enemies, ere his friends could come up to his rescue. The helpless heir, Edmund Mortimer, was at this time only an infant of ten years of age, and was instantly given by Henry of Lancaster in ward to his son, the prince of Wales, who placed him in Windsor castle, where, though strictly guarded, he seems to have been treated in a courteous and indulgent manner. It does not appear that Edmund inherited either the restlessness and ambition which characterized some of his ancestors, or the martial gallantry which blazed forth in others; but his existence was often used as an apology, by more ambitious spirits, for their own factious proceedings; and might, but for his own want of enterprize, have seriously incommoded the councils of regency, during the minority of Henry VI. His appointment to the command of Ireland, on the accession of the young king, was a piece of dexterous policy. While it gratified that love of show and magnificence which seemed to be his only master passion, it removed him from intercourse with those men and measures which might have roused some latent spark of ambition in the breast of one, the heir of so many dangerous pretensions. His death, which took place in the third year of Henry VI., seemed to secure the permanent establishment of the Lancastrian family upon the throne.



## Owen Glendower.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1349.—DIED A. D. 1415.

OWEN GLENDOWER,<sup>1</sup> whose noble resistance of the English arms amid the declining fortunes of his native country has obtained for him the appellation of the Wallace of Wales, was born, as is commonly supposed, in the year 1349. Historians have agreed on the minute date of the day of the year—which they all concur in fixing on the 28th of May—but there exists a wide discrepancy amongst them in the more important article of the year itself which ushered this hero into the world: Lewis Owen says 1349, whilst other annalists determine it to have been 1354. Trefgarn, in Pembrokeshire, was the place of his birth. His father was Gryffyd Vychan; by the mother's side he was lineally descended from Llewellyn, the last prince of Wales. The birth of our hero was not without its portents, 'to mark him extraordinary.' Holinshed relates that his father's horses were found that night standing in the stables up to their girths in blood, and the traditionary legends of Wales abound in equally marvellous stories concerning so important an event.<sup>2</sup> The young Owen received a liberal education, according to the estimate of the age. He is represented as having started in life in the profession of a pleader in the inns of Court; but afterwards relinquishing his profession, he received the appointment of esquire in the household of Richard II., and adhered to that unfortunate prince till his surrender of the crown had released all his followers from their obligations to his person.

During the reign of Richard, Owen had been engaged in a dispute about the boundaries of his lordship of Glendowrly with Reginald, Lord Grey de Ruthyn, an Anglo-Norman, whose seignories lay immediately adjoining; and had recovered at law a piece of ground which lay betwixt the two properties. But Reginald, upon the accession of Henry IV., again resumed possession of the disputed territory, whilst Owen appealed in vain for redress to the first parliament of the new monarch.<sup>3</sup> Disappointed in his suit in this quarter, he resolved to enforce his claims at his own hand. In the summer of 1400, he attacked the castle of his rival, and laid waste his barony. Here the affair might have terminated, had not the king, taking the cause into his own hands, ordered Lords Talbot and Grey to march against him, and surround him in his own house. Upon their approach, Glendower retired into the inaccessible fastnesses of Snowdon, where he successfully maintained a guerilla warfare against the English forces. Stimulated by a sense of national degradation, and the recollection of the haughty Edward's conduct towards their country, and encouraged, perhaps, by the vague prophecies of Merlin and Aquila which wandering minstrels sung throughout the country, thousands of his countrymen flocked to his standard, and, on the 20th of September, Glan-

<sup>1</sup> In the 'Collection of the Public Acts,' he is always called Glendowrly.

<sup>2</sup> Shakspeare has availed himself of these supernatural omens in Henry IV.

"At my nativity

The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes,  
Of burning cressets," &c.

<sup>3</sup> Walsing. p. 364.

dower, finding himself already at the head of a powerful and spirited army, proclaimed himself Prince of Wales. The defeat of the Flemings of Pembroke and Cardiganshire, who had been surrounded with a greatly superior force on Mynydd Hyddgant, was followed by the capture of Lord Grey, who obtained his sovereign's license to purchase his liberty by acceptance of the terms of ransom proposed by Glendower. These were of such a kind as neutralized the future efforts of his prisoner. Besides payment of 10,000 marks, the proud baron was compelled to accept of the hand of Jane, his rival's daughter, in marriage. Henry now published a general amnesty, with no other exceptions than Owen of Glendowrdy, Rice ap Tudor, and William ap Tudor.<sup>4</sup> But the Welsh continued to pour into the camp of their countryman from all quarters, and even the Welsh students at Oxford and Cambridge hastened to join the national cause. The revolt had now assumed too serious an aspect for ordinary measures. In the month of October 1401, Henry placed himself at the head of an army and set out in person to chastise the presumptuous rebel;<sup>5</sup> but the activity of Owen, aided by an uncommonly severe winter, rendered all his efforts abortive, and a dishonourable retreat followed. The Percies now rebelled, and the irregular and wild Glendower joined that formidable coalition, which we have treated of under another head. His next step was to assemble the estates of the principality at Machynlaeth in Montgomeryshire, by whom he was formally crowned sovereign of Wales.

Henry was successful in preventing the junction of the Northumbrian and Welsh forces, but Owen maintained with unabated spirit the independence of his country; and, in 1404, concluded a treaty of alliance with Charles, King of France, in which he styled himself, "*Owemus Dei Gratia Princeps Walliæ*,"<sup>6</sup> &c. The king of England now entrusted the recovery of Wales to his gallant son, Henry of Monmouth, whom he created lord-lieutenant of that country, with special powers, for the better execution of his commission.<sup>7</sup> Owen commenced the campaign of 1405 by taking some castles, and defeating the earl of Warwick at Mynydd Cwmda in Montgomeryshire; but the young Henry soon after successively defeated Owen himself at Grosmount, and his son at Mynydd-y-Pwli-Melyn.

Owen was now compelled to seek an asylum in the most inaccessible spots of Wales. A diversion was made in his favour by a French armament, but its success was only temporary, and Prince Henry gradually got possession of the strongest fortresses of the country. Still he seems to have struggled on with unconquerable spirit though diminished fortunes. In 1411, we find him specially excepted from the general pardon issued by Henry, as an arch-rebel with whom his enemies dared not to negotiate.<sup>8</sup> In the ensuing year, David Gam, an apostate Welshman, who had been seized in an attempt to assassinate Glendower, though his own brother-in-law, obtained license to purchase his liberty by payment of a ransom to the unconquered chief. Three months before the battle of Agincourt, Henry V. commissioned Sir Gilbert Talbot to treat with Glendower, and the offer was again renewed after that victory had graced the English arms; but, during the negotiation,

<sup>4</sup> Rymer's Fœd. viii. 181.

<sup>6</sup> Rymer's Fœd. viii. 356.

<sup>7</sup> Ib. viii. 291.

<sup>5</sup> Walsing. 364.

<sup>8</sup> Rymer's Fœd. viii. 711.

death overtook this last king of the Britons, who expired on the 20th of September, 1415. His countrymen seem to have forgotten the memory of their intrepid defender sooner than his enemies themselves. In the year 1431, the English commons besought the lords to enforce the forfeiture of Owen Glendower's lands, whom they describe as an arch-traitor, whose success would have been "to the destruction of all English tongue for evermore."<sup>9</sup>

## Sir William Gascoigne.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1350.—DIED A. D. 1413.

SIR WILLIAM GASCOIGNE, chief-justice of the king's bench in the reign of Henry IV., was born at Gawthorp, in Yorkshire, about the year 1350. His family was noble, and of Norman extraction. Having studied law, and acquired considerable reputation as a pleader, he was appointed one of the king's sergeants-at-law in 1398. Upon the accession of Henry IV., he was made judge in the court of common pleas; and, in 1401, was elevated to the chief-justiceship of the king's bench. In July, 1403, he was joined in the commission with Ralph Neville, earl of Westmoreland, for levying forces in Yorkshire and Northumberland against the insurrection of Henry Percy; and, on the submission of that nobleman, he was nominated in the commission to treat with the rebels. In all these high trusts, Gascoigne acquitted himself to the satisfaction of his royal master and the kingdom at large. But on the apprehension of Archbishop Scroop, when the king required his chief-justice to pass sentence of death upon him as a traitor, the virtuous and inflexible Gascoigne sternly refused, because the laws which he was appointed to administer gave him no jurisdiction over the life of an ecclesiastic. Henry was highly displeased at the obstinacy, but had sufficient strength of mind to respect the integrity of his minister, and Gascoigne had the honour of knighthood conferred on him the same year.

From his general conduct, as related by historians, there is sufficient reason to place Sir William Gascoigne in the first rank of chief-justices, both for integrity and abilities. The many abstracts of his opinions, arguments, and decisions, which occur in our older law-reports, sufficiently attest the general opinion which was entertained of his professional merits. One memorable transaction, which still remains upon record, would have sufficed, had others equally strong been wanting, to have stamped his character for ever with the noble feature of judicial independence. It happened that one of the associates of the youthful, and then dissolute prince of Wales, had been arraigned for felony. The news of his favourite's apprehension no sooner reached the prince's ears, than he hastened to the court, and imperiously demanded that the prisoner should be immediately set at liberty. Gascoigne desired him instantly to withdraw, and leave the law to take its course; whereupon the prince, breaking through all restraint and decorum, rushed furiously up to the bench, and, as is generally affirmed, struck the chief-justice.

<sup>9</sup> Rot. Parl. iv. 377.—Hen. VI.



On this, Sir William coolly ordered his assailant to be taken into custody, and after administering a sharp reproof to him in the hearing of the court, ordered him into confinement in the prison of the king's bench. The young prince had the good sense to submit calmly to the punishment which he had so justly merited; and, when the matter was related to his father, it is recorded to his honour also, that, instead of manifesting any displeasure towards the chief-justice, he thanked God for having given him 'both a judge who knew how to administer the laws, and a son who respected their authority.' Gascoigne was called to the parliament which met in the first year of Henry V., but died before the expiration of the year, on the 17th of December, 1413. He was twice married, and left a numerous train of descendants by both his wives.

## Henry V.

BORN A. D. 1388.—DIED A. D. 1422.

THE younger days of this gallant and splendid sovereign were, as is of common knowledge, remarkable for eccentricity and licentiousness; it is less notorious that the season of wild excess was darkened by acts, or at least by machinations, of far deeper criminality. Shakspeare has made us all familiar with the rough gaities and unprincely associations amid which Falstaff's 'mad compound of majesty' wasted the rich hours of youth, and cast away the 'golden opinions' of the wise and good; but, in his immortal scenes, the redeeming brightness of an ingenuous spirit breaks through the shadows that a restless and inconsiderate temper had thrown over the promise of clear intellect and generous feelings. History insinuates, rather than reveals, a tale of less extenuable guilt. It tells, indeed, of that impetuous but noble disposition, which, when it had violated the sanctuary and insulted the administrator of justice, could so well atone, by yielding dignified obedience to the sentence that avenged its questioned supremacy. It tells, beside, of more doubtful transactions; when dark rumours and fearful intimations had reached the ears of the reigning king, of insolent speeches betraying unhallowed designs; and when, clad in fantastic attire of silk and gold, and followed by a numerous train, the half-petulant, half-penitent aspirant, fell at his father's feet, and proffered life as the pledge of sincerity.<sup>1</sup> But this is not all: there are still in existence, documents which impute to the prince a deliberately formed purpose to dethrone the king, and affirm the fact, that in open parliament the latter was required by his son to resign the crown, which disease prevented him from wearing with dignity and efficiency. It is farther stated, that when this insolent and unfilial requisition was at once rejected, the younger Henry withdrew in fierce anger, and forthwith engaged in measures intended ultimately to force from his father's weakened grasp the sceptre which, however gained, had been wielded with signal ability. The death of the king prevented the consumma-

<sup>1</sup> Stow, 339.

tion of this treason, and gave to the craving heir an innocent and undisputed possession.<sup>2</sup>

Few sovereigns have ascended the throne more eminently endowed with mental and personal advantages than was Henry of Monmouth. In prime of manhood, graceful in person and manner, singularly vigorous and active, he obtained the favour of the commonalty by his fair exterior and courteous deportment. Of distinguished talents, well-cultivated by education, and called into exercise by early experience both in counsel and action, he commanded the admiration and obedience of those whose rank or whose sagacity gave them influence.

When his father was sent into banishment, Henry was a mere boy, and in his twelfth year made his first campaign in the Irish expedition of Richard II., who had taken him under his care, and on that occasion gave him knighthood with his own hand. When his father landed in England on the enterprise which gave him a kingdom, Henry disarmed, by his shrewdness and presence of mind, the anger of Richard, which was rising to his danger. The elder Henry seems to have been anxious that his son should be well-instructed in the art of war. He had a command under his father in the Scottish and Welsh campaigns, and in the desperate conflict which, at Shrewsbury, crushed the rebellion of the Percies, the prince distinguished himself alike as an officer and a soldier. When only sixteen, he had assigned to him the arduous task of subjugating Wales, and in all that he undertook he exhibited high courage and skilful conduct. The excesses which, in the words of Elmham, 'clouded as with the black smoke of misdoing,' the brightness of his rising, were thrown aside when, at the early age of twenty-five, he assumed the crown. His father's death seemed to have awakened in him the dormant elements of his nobler nature: he lamented his filial errors,—discarded his dissolute companions,—and took to his counsels the men who had rebuked and withstood him in the season of his extravagance. He gave freedom to the earl of March, whose lineal claim to the crown had induced the former king to detain him, if not in absolute captivity, at least in strict observance,—he restored the exiled son of 'Harry Percy' to his rank and possessions,—and when the remains of Richard received, at his command, a royal burial in Westminster abbey, he led, as chief mourner, the funeral procession.<sup>3</sup>

The first decided trial of Henry's character as statesman and warrior, is exhibited in the affair of the Lollards. Of those *heretics*, Dr Lingard, the advocate of Romanism, gives an unfavourable representation, as the abettors of a wild and injurious theology, and as men quite prepared to engage in active and thorough-going rebellion. This is mere exaggeration. It may be difficult to extract from the chroniclers of the olden time, a clear and unbiassed explanation of facts and circumstances; but a fair and temperate investigation would certainly bring out a more exculpatory result. It is probable that the persecuting policy of the house of Lancaster might produce exasperation, but the

<sup>2</sup> It should be mentioned, that the sole authority for this statement appears to be an unpublished writing, ascribed to the contemporary historian Walsingham, extant among the Sloane MSS., and first cited by Sharon Turner. It is worthy of observation, that of the prince's requisition, though apparently made with all formality, no trace is to be found in the rolls of parliament.

<sup>3</sup> Walsing. 385.—Otterb. 274.

design against the king's person,—its failure through his removal from Eltham,—and the consequent armed assemblage in St Giles's fields,—are, if not altogether apocryphal, liable to reasonable suspicion, as excessively overcharged by party feeling. Henry was a persecutor: he gave up his companion, Sir John Oldecastle, to the tender mercies of an ecclesiastical tribunal; and he adopted, in its full extent, the system of deference practised by his father towards the hierarchy. He appears, indeed, to have been characterised by a stern and inflexible severity. His hasty order for the massacre of the prisoners at Azincour, may be defended on the ground of necessity; but his insensibility to human suffering is proved by his conduct at the siege of Rouen, when he suffered twelve thousand non-combatants—men, women, and children—to perish between his camp and the walls, rather than depart from his refusal to allow them a passage through his lines.

From the very outset of his kingly career, Henry's mind seems to have been fixed on foreign conquest, and his aim was nothing less than the sovereignty of France. That kingdom was miserably vexed by the feuds of its powerful lords: the war between the respective parties of the Dauphin and the duke of Burgundy, shook the foundations of the state; and hence, in the creed of conquerors, it presented to ambition a legitimate field, a fair arena, on which armies might contend for the mastery, while a suffering nation paid the heavy cost both of victory and defeat. Henry negotiated until his preparations were complete, and in August, 1415, landed in Normandy, after having been delayed at Southampton by the detection and punishment of a treasonable conspiracy, in which his cousin, the earl of Cambridge, and Lord Scroop, his favoured intimate, were desperately and unaccountably concerned. Six thousand men-at-arms and twenty-four thousand archers were marshalled on the shores of France, and immediately invested Harfleur, which yielded after a gallant defence. Henry was thus furnished with a strongly fortified place of arms, but it had cost him dear; half, at least, of his numbers had either fallen in the operations of the siege, or perished by disease. Shorn of its strength, the army was now altogether unequal to decisive operations; yet, although prudence clearly dictated the expediency of postponing farther movements until strongly reinforced, the king, on some strange ground of punctilious intrepidity, determined on forcing his way over the hostile ground that lay between him and Calais. From this moment the campaign becomes an object of the highest interest. The constable of France, Charles d'Albret, though far from a first-rate commander, seems to have acted under sound advice. Aware of the faults which had led to the discomfiture of Cressy and Poitiers, he adopted a cautious and defensive policy, fully resolved not to fight except on such vantage-ground and with such favourable odds of number, as to make victory certain. Strong corps of partizans hung upon the march of the English, pressing on their flanks and rear, wasting the country around, and occupying every defensible post, while the main army of the French held, in overpowering force, the right bank of the Somme. Leaving out of consideration the primary error—the mal-apropos entertainment of the point of honour—nothing could be more ably conducted than the movements and manœuvres of Henry. Finding the fords of the Somme palisaded and strongly guarded, he determined on turning it



by its sources, and for that purpose moved off by his right, at the same time seizing every opportunity of attempting to find or force a passage. Happily the negligence of the garrison of St Quentin saved him eight days of disastrous march, amid privations of all kinds, and with soldiers debilitated, though not disheartened, by disease. He lost no time in pushing his army across the river, and establishing it on the opposite bank; six days afterwards the battle of Azincour was fought. It was on the 25th of October that this memorable conflict took place, to the immortal honour of the English sovereign as a warrior and general; whether to the equal credit of his prudence and humanity, is a point less easily ascertained. Nothing could exceed the ability of Henry's arrangements: the strength of his position was essentially defensive, but he showed himself fully prepared for the more vigorous alternative when demanded by circumstances. The French fought stoutly, but their masses were ill handled, and the terrific discharge of the English archery kept the men-at-arms from closing. Still with such energy and perseverance did the French soldiery attack, that the British line was at first borne back a spear's length, and it was only by dint of hard fighting that the ground could be recovered. At last, however, the unwieldy and closely-pressed masses of the constable's divisions, assailed in front, turned on their flanks, and menaced in rear, became an intimidated and ungovernable mob, which the English, with bill, sword, lance, and club, butchered without resistance. The victory was gained, 1. Through Henry's admirable choice and skilful occupation of his ground; 2. By his prompt seizure of the critical moment for changing his system of defence into a bold and vigorous offensive; 3. By the error of the constable in allowing himself to engage on ground where his divisions were hampered by their own numbers; 4. By the terrible ferocity with which the English soldiers fought. The king was in the greatest personal danger: once was he struck to the ground by the blow of a mace, and a stroke from the duke of Alençon's sword cleaved the crown which encircled his helmet. Sixteen hundred of the victors fell, including the earl of Suffolk and the duke of York.<sup>4</sup> Other authorities greatly reduce the numbers reported as slain. "They," (the French,) says an old writer, "had, according to their own reckoning, more than sixty thousand that drew the sword, when our fighting men did not exceed six thousand; and out of their numbers fell the dukes of Brabant, Barre, and Alençon, five earls, upwards of ninety barons and standard-bearers, whose names are written in the book of records; and more than one thousand five hundred knights, according to their own computation, and between four and five thousand other nobles, being nearly all the nobility of the French knighthood. And there were taken of the remaining number, the dukes of Orleans and Bourbon; the earls of Richemund, de Vendosme, and de Jeye; also the most mighty soldier, Lord Bugicald, marshal of France, and but few other noblemen." The glory of this splendid victory was clouded by an act of barbarity to which allusion has been already made. A band of marauders, while the fight was at the hottest, sacked a village in the English rear, where all the baggage had been lodged. The king, apprized

<sup>4</sup> Monstrelet.<sup>5</sup> Sloane MS.

of the fact, but not aware of its real nature, ordered, under the impression that it was a regular assault by a numerous division, all his prisoners to be put to the sword. To us of the present day, when milder maxims prevail in war, this act appears little better than an atrocious massacre, but by contemporaries, it was considered as a resolution severe, indeed, but justified by the emergency; and so completely was it regarded in this light by the French themselves, that they punished the individuals whose plundering expedition had occasioned the slaughter, as having driven Henry to so fatal a necessity.

The victory was not followed up. Henry returned to England with his booty, and during nearly two years abstained from farther aggression. At length, however, he was tempted to another effort by the miserable condition to which France was reduced through the struggle for power between the factions of the dauphin and the duke of Burgundy. After much negotiation, and a disgusting exhibition of selfish and faithless character, the leading parties consented to a compromise of their respective claims, and agreed to a union of their forces against the formidable invader who now stood upon the soil of France at the separate invitation of them both. Indignant at this foul play, and resolute to take revenge for the intrigue of which he had been the dupe, Henry, having already made himself master of Normandy, advanced towards the capital, and having seized Pontoise, paused awhile to watch the course of events, which was speedily turned in his favour by an act of the darkest treachery. The dastardly and impolitic assassination of the duke of Burgundy under the eye of the dauphin, threw the whole Burgundian party into the arms of Henry. The regency,—the succession to the crown,—the hand of the princess of France,—were all pledged to him; and in the winter of 1420, he entered Paris in triumph, where his claims were acknowledged and the treaty ratified by the three estates of the realm. Early in 1421, he returned to England, and his progress from the coast to his capital was an uninterrupted triumphal procession, terminated by the splendid coronation of his beautiful queen. A partial defeat of his troops in Anjou, which cost him the life of his brother, the duke of Clarence, recalled him to France at the head of a formidable reinforcement. This success had been gained chiefly by the Scottish auxiliaries of the dauphin, and Henry gave fresh proof of a fierce and vindictive temper, by hanging every Scot taken in arms during the operations which ensued. He now surrounded himself with regal magnificence, and exercised the functions of regent without challenge or control; but in the midst of his victorious exultation, a mightier arm had smitten him; a secret disease was sapping his constitutional vigour, and in the full career of conquest he was met by the stern arrest of the 'fell sergeant.' He exhibited in the last moments of existence all the firmness of his character, received the viaticum with devotion, and affirmed that it had been his intention to undertake a crusade for the recovery of Jerusalem, after he should have completed the subjugation of France. He died August 31, 1422, leaving his infant son under the guardianship of the earl of Warwick, and the government of England and France to his brothers, the dukes of Bedford and Gloucester.

Henry died almost in the very flush and spring-tide of his youth, and the consequent brevity of his reign, with the military events which

gave it a distinguishing character, made his domestic government comparatively insignificant; yet it may be observed, in general, that he was not unreluctant to gratify his faithful commons—the source of the liberal supplies which enabled him to achieve his foreign conquests—by conceding and confirming their claim to an equal share in the legislation of the kingdom.

## Lord Cobham.

DIED A. D. 1417.

SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE, sometimes called ‘the good Lord Cobham,’ was born in the reign of Edward III. He obtained his peerage, by marrying the heiress of that Lord Cobham who, with so much virtue and patriotism, opposed the tyrannical measures of Richard II. In early life, he became a zealous supporter of the Wickliffites, and besides expending large sums in the transcription and circulation of that reformer’s writings, he maintained a number of his disciples as itinerant preachers in various parts of the country. Not contented with the revival of the famous statute against provisors, Lord Cobham, in conjunction with Sir Richard Story, Sir Thomas Latimer, and others of the reforming party, prepared a series of articles against the abuses then prevalent among churchmen, which they presented in the form of a remonstrance to the commons. These measures drew upon him the indignation of the whole ecclesiastical order throughout England; and various attempts were made to crush him and his coadjutors before their party had gathered sufficient strength to defend itself. On the accession of Henry IV., Lord Cobham was invited to court, and soon after received the joint command, with the earl of Arundel, of the armament which Henry sent to the aid of the duke of Burgundy. It would appear, from his acceptance of this commission, that the disciple had not yet entirely reconciled himself to the peaceable task of his master. Perhaps—as Gilpin observes—like other casuists, he indulged a favourite point, and found arguments to make that indulgence lawful.

One of the first measures which Arundel prevailed on Henry V. to adopt, was the appointment of a commission to inquire into the growth of heresy at Oxford. Oxford was the chief seat of the new and pestilential heresy. Here Wickliff had laboured, and here the learning, the eloquence, the labours, and the unshrinking fortitude of the apostolic man were yet the objects of admiration. The commissioners fulfilled their task, and reported that the new heresy still continued to spread and fester among the students, and that this was mainly owing to the example and patronage of the Lord Cobham, who not only avowedly held heretical opinions himself, but encouraged scholars, by bountiful stipends, to propagate these opinions throughout the country. The convocation hereupon determined to enforce the penalties of the law against the noble heretic; but the king, unwilling to sacrifice his faithful servant and friend, undertook the task himself of prevailing on him to retract his errors. Lord Cobham’s answer to the speech in which Henry endeavoured to convince him of his errors and high offence in separating from the church, is upon record: “I ever was,” said he,



“and I hope ever will be, a dutiful subject to your majesty. Next to the obedience which I owe to God, is that which I profess to my king. But as for the spiritual dominion of the pope, I never could see on what foundation it rested, neither can I pay him any obedience. As sure as the word of God is true, to me it seems evident, that the pope is the great antichrist foretold in holy writ.” Baffled in the attempt to convince his heretical subject of his errors, the king allowed the archbishop to pursue his own measures; and accordingly Cobham was cited to appear before the ecclesiastical tribunal on a fixed day, and, failing to appear, was pronounced contumacious, and solemnly excommunicated.

The next step, Cobham foresaw, would prove fatal to him, unless he could interest the king in his favour. With this view, he put in writing a confession of his faith, and, waiting upon the king, placed it in his hands, entreating him to consider the whole case, and to judge for himself in the matter. The king received the document, but coldly ordered it to be given to the archbishop. Cobham then offered to adduce one hundred knights who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life and opinions; but the king still continued silent. At this instant, a person entered the audience-chamber, and, in the king's presence, cited Cobham to appear before the archbishop, and he was immediately hurried to the tower. On being brought before the primate the first time, he was offered absolution and remission of past offences, on his expressing his regret and penitence; but this he sternly declined doing. At his second examination, he was asked, whether, in the sacrament of the supper, after the words of consecration, there remained any material bread? To which he replied: “My belief is, that Christ's body is contained under the form of bread.” He was next asked, whether he thought confession to a priest of absolute necessity? To which he replied, that he thought it might be, in many cases, useful to ask the opinion of a priest, if he were a learned and pious man; but he considered it by no means necessary to salvation. Being questioned about the pope's right to St Peter's chair, he answered: “He that followeth Peter the highest in holy living, is next him in succession.” And being pressed to say what he thought of the pope, he boldly replied: “That he and you together make whole the great antichrist; he is the head, you bishops and priests the body, and the begging friars are the tail.” He was finally asked, what he thought of the worship of images and holy relics? “I pay them no manner of regard,” was the undaunted reply. The archbishop then observed that he found lenity was thrown away upon the prisoner, but again offered him the alternative to submit to the church, or abide the consequences. “My faith is fixed,” replied his lordship, “do with me what you please.” Whereupon the archbishop, standing up, and taking off his cap, pronounced aloud the censure of the church: but some months were allowed to elapse, without proceeding to extremities against the prisoner.

In the meantime his lordship effected his escape from the tower, and hastened into Wales, where, under the protection of some of the chiefs of that country, he defied the pursuit of his enemies. A miserable attempt has been made by some popish writers, to represent Lord Cobham as soon afterwards appearing in St Giles's fields, at the head of a body of rebels, amounting to twenty thousand men. It is indeed true, that the church party succeeded in convincing the king that

Cobham was extensively engaged in treasonable practices, and a price was in consequence set upon his head; but the whole affair, and especially the Giles's fields conspiracy, was a pure invention of his lordship's enemies, as Fox has most satisfactorily proved, in his *'Defence of Lord Cobham against Alanus Copus.'*<sup>1</sup> In a parliament, held at Leicester a few months after, a bill was brought in, declaring that heresy should incur the forfeitures of treason, and that those who had broken prison, after having been convicted of heresy, should be liable in the full penalties, unless they rendered themselves again,—a clause too evidently aimed at Cobham, to require comment from us. For a period of four years, Lord Cobham remained an exile in Wales, shifting frequently the scene of his retreat. At last he was betrayed by Lord Powis, and conducted to London, where, with every instance of barbarous insult, he suffered death in St Giles's fields.

## Henry VI.

BORN A. D. 1421.—DIED A. D. 1471.

AT the accession of this prince, the conjuncture was ominous of disaster to England. Henry of Azincour, by his victories and negotiations, had placed the nation on an eminence at once so lofty and so hazardous, as to require, perhaps, even more than his own energy and skill for its firm holding; yet this doubtful elevation was now to be maintained by a power of which the elements were, an infant king, a wrangling regency, and a people among whom the feelings of partizanship had not as yet had time to wear out. That section of history which includes the effort to clear away the rubbish of ancient prejudices, and the wreck of barbarous institutions, was, with respect to the English people, still in progress. It had never occurred to them that the mere quarrel of dynasties could not, in any way, concern the state; nor that the particular strife between the families of York and Lancaster, presented no prospect in the triumph of either party, of the smallest compensation for the miseries of civil war. Hence, they were ever ready, like soldiers of fortune, to peril their lives in the cause of any popular chieftain, who might, under whatever pretext of injury or right, raise the standard of revolt. A strong arm, and determined resolution, combined in a single ruler, might have contracted this turbulent spirit, or given it vent in foreign enterprize; but the council of regency was a divided body; and the seasonable interposition of parliament seems to have been absolutely necessary to prevent an actual warfare between Cardinal Beaufort and the duke of Gloucester; the former, a son of John of Gaunt; the latter, brother to the late king; and both of them leading members of the administration. The prelate seems to have been a man greedy of gain, yet making his avarice subservient to his policy; ambition was another of his besetting sins; and in his advance towards his object, he did not permit scruples

<sup>1</sup> We are not surprised to find the hasty, inaccurate, and prejudiced Hume, carelessly following the authority of Walsingham—a mere bigot—upon this point; but it does surprise us to find the Giles's fields conspiracy treated with all the gravity of authentic history by such a man as Dr Lingard. See his 3d vol. p. 396.

of conscience to interpose with any obvious effect. The character of the duke presents a harder problem for solution. He was accomplished and popular; but in more substantial qualities he appears to have been deficient. Immorality, inconsistency, and miserable selfishness, mark his conduct, as recorded in history. He outraged public decency in his successive marriages to Jacqueline of Hainault, and Eleanor Cobham, while he sacrificed the interests of his country in favour of his own absurd claims to the sovereignty of Holland. His elder brother, the duke of Bedford, held the high and hazardous office of regent of France, and his efforts to maintain and extend his authority were continually thwarted by the waywardness of Gloucester.

This state of things was favourable to what may be termed the national, in opposition to the Anglo-Burgundian party in France, and the commanders of the French troops were not slow to take advantage of the crisis. Their first effort had for its object the capture of Crevant, a fortress of importance on the river Yonne, and the siege was formed by a division of French soldiers, aided by three thousand Scottish auxiliaries, the whole under the command of the earl of Buchan, constable of Scotland. Four thousand Englishmen-at-arms, led by the earl of Salisbury, marched for the relief of the town, and a fierce battle was fought, which ended in the defeat of the allies, and the capture of their commander. The chief loss fell on the Scots, who bore the brunt of the conflict, and to whom little quarter was given. This savage extermination appears to have been perpetrated in revenge for the death, not long before, of the duke of Clarence, who fell in a rash attack on a superior force of Scottish troops in French pay. These faithful auxiliaries seem, indeed, to have been, at this time, the main support of the national cause, and in the following year they formed the strength of the army, which fought the strenuously contested battle of Verneuil, gained by the duke of Bedford over a force doubling the numbers of his own. Never was victory more fiercely contended for than on this bloody day; and it was at last decided by a powerful reserve of archers, which, after having repelled a determined charge made by a strong body of Italian cavalry on the English rear, was brought up fresh, and flushed with victory, to the support of their countrymen. The duke of Alençon yielded himself prisoner, and the earl of Buchan was killed.<sup>1</sup> These brilliant successes were, however, rendered ineffectual by the absurd ambition of the duke of Gloucester, who employed the troops which were urgently required by the regent in aid of the great objects of the war, in a miserable attempt to enforce his own claims, in right of his wife Jacqueline, to the lordship of Brabant. Bedford was, moreover, at this critical period, compelled to leave France, that he might mediate between Gloucester and Beaufort.

But a crisis was now approaching which was to render all these achievements ineffectual, and to commence a series of events which were to terminate in the final extinction of all schemes for the permanent subjugation of France. The duke of Bedford, who was no less eminent as a statesman than as a warrior, seems to have been fully aware of the precariousness of the tenure by which England held her French conquests; and when the question, whether the English troops

<sup>1</sup> Monstrelet.



should pass the Loire, was agitated among his councillors, gave his decided opinion against the enterprise. He suffered, however, his own better judgment to be overpowered by the urgency of others, and gave a reluctant consent to the employment of an army in the siege of Orleans, a place strongly fortified and of the utmost importance as the key of the southern provinces. The earl of Salisbury, reputed the ablest of the English generals, took the command of the besieging troops, and, on the 12th of October, 1428, encamped before the city. The French, meanwhile, were not negligent of their interest: La Hire, Xaintrailles, Dunois, the most illustrious warriors of their age and country, were on the spot, and a strong garrison occupied every assailable point. At an early period of the siege the English sustained the irreparable loss of their commander, who was mortally wounded while reconnoitering the defences; he was succeeded by the earl of Suffolk, and for a time the operations were pushed forward vigorously and successfully. In February 1429, the 'Battle of Herrings' was gained by Sir John Fastolfe—a gallant officer, maugre the liberties taken with his name—and the investment of the place having been completed, the besieged offered to surrender upon terms which were, however, deemed inadmissible. At this desperate moment when all seemed lost, and the French monarch, abandoned by many of those who had hitherto held to him in all fortunes, was meditating a retreat to the south-eastern extremity of France, he was saved by one of those miraculous interferences which are, every now and then, occurring in history, as if for the express purpose of baffling human counsel, and bringing to nought the enterprises of men. Joan d'Arc, the daughter of poor labouring peasants of Domremy, and herself the menial of a petty inn,<sup>2</sup> suddenly appeared upon the scene, claiming to have been sent by the decree and inspiration of heaven for the deliverance of France. This is not the place for inquiry, special and minute, into all the circumstances of this singular transaction; notwithstanding that the general opinion seems to incline towards the belief, that the enterprise of the 'Maiden' was undertaken without previous counsel or arrangement, and that it was the unsuggested impulse of her own fanaticism, there are indications, neither few nor unimportant, which may lead to an opposite conclusion; none, however, that can in the slightest degree impeach her character, or justify the inhuman conduct of her destroyers. Leaving, then, these doubtful investigations, it may suffice to say, that the French leaders exerted themselves with energy and ability, while the presence of Joan of Arc inspirited the soldiery, La Hire and Dunois directed the operations. The English generals, on the contrary, seem to have acted with little either of talent or boldness; they allowed Orleans to be relieved almost without opposition, and suffered themselves to be divided and beaten in detail. Suffolk and Talbot were taken prisoners, as they deserved, for fighting without concert, and under circumstances which made defeat certain, and would have neutralised success, had success been possible. Joan entered Orleans in triumph, and conducted Charles in safety through a hostile territory to Rheims, where his coronation was regularly performed. The mission of the 'Maiden' was now completed, and her career well nigh run; she failed in an attempt

<sup>2</sup> Monstrieux.

to storm Paris, and in May 1430 was made prisoner by the Burgundians, who sold her to the English, by whom, in the following year, she was burnt as a witch.<sup>3</sup> It is customary, at this particular point, for the historian of the times to stop and tax his invention for novelties in the way of indignant reproach of the English chiefs for this atrocious execution. Perhaps, however, there may have been somewhat too much of this. If we, of the present day, have ceased to burn and drown for the imputed crime of witchcraft, it may be well to allow due force to the consideration that, in the fifteenth century, it was guilt little less than that of sorcery itself, either to doubt of its existence, or to extend mercy to the sworn lieges of the prince of darkness. Perhaps, too, it may tend to diminish an excess of sympathy with the 'Maid of Orleans,' if it be recollected, that but a few short days before her own capture, she ordered a Burgundian general, taken in fair battle, to be beheaded on the field. After all, France was more indebted to the strife of parties in England, and to the secession of the duke of Burgundy from the English alliance, than to the relief of Orleans, or the consecration at Rheims. The death of the duke of Bedford, in September 1435, delivered the French from their most formidable enemy.

In the meantime, England was oppressed by the evils of a minority. Misrule prevailed in the government, disorder and speculation in the finances; at home the state of society was unsettled, and abroad, the French war wasted the sources of the national strength, while it abundantly enriched those favoured individuals who were enabled to profit by its casualties. The regency of France yielded to Bedford 20,000 crowns monthly; and in one year the government of Normandy realized the sum of 950,000 francs.<sup>4</sup> In the negotiations for peace, which took place at Arras in 1435, the reasonable conditions offered by the French were rejected by the English, and the duke of Burgundy immediately concluded a separate treaty, and the death of the duke of Bedford gave the final blow to the supremacy of England. The duke of York and other officers made a gallant stand against the advancing and increasing power of France, but the pressure was too strong for their means of resistance, and, in the event, nearly every vestige of invasion was swept away.

Years, meanwhile, were passing away, and Henry was advancing towards his majority. He made repeated efforts to obtain a more decided participation in the government, but they were rendered ineffectual by the *veto* of Beaufort and his coadjutors in the council, of whom the earl of Suffolk was the most influential. To the counsels of this nobleman is to be ascribed the marriage of the young Henry with Margaret of Anjou, daughter of the titular king of Sicily and Jerusalem. These disastrous nuptials were attended by strange circumstances. In all such transactions, it had been usual to seek for some substantial advantage, in the shape either of treasure or of territorial acquisition, but in the present instance Suffolk consented to purchase a dowerless bride by the cession of important districts in France. She was, indeed, beautiful, accomplished, and high spirited, but her personal interference in the administration was most injurious to the coun-

<sup>3</sup> Meyer, 316.

<sup>4</sup> Philip de Comines.

try, while to herself, her family, and friends, it was destructive. The first act of the party, with which this ill-judging woman chose to identify her interests, was the arrest and probable murder of the duke of Gloucester early in 1447. Six weeks afterwards, his old and unrelenting enemy, Cardinal Beaufort, went to his account—a prelate described by the old chronicles, as “more noble of blood than notable in learning, haught in stomach, and high in countenance; rich above measure of all men, and to few liberal; disdainful to his kin, and dreadful to his lovers; preferring money before friendship; many things beginning and nothing performing.”<sup>5</sup> By the death of these statesmen, Suffolk was raised without a rival to the summit of power, but his unpopularity continued and increased, nor could the queen’s favour shield him from impeachment. Many of Suffolk’s acts were singularly impolitic, and liable, if not to suspicion, at least to severe animadversion, yet his enemies seem to have been at a loss for matter of positive accusation, and they were at last compelled to adopt an extrajudicial procedure, for the purpose of effecting his banishment. He sailed from Ipswich, but a squadron from the cinque-ports interrupted him, and, after a mockery of trial, he was beheaded with a rusty sword, by an inexpert hand. His administration had sown abundantly the seeds of disaffection, and his death awakened apprehensions of vindictive visitation. The men of Kent rose under the command of Jack Cade, who assumed the name of Mortimer, and obtained, for a time, unresisted possession of London, but was ultimately expelled by the armed citizens, aided by the garrison of the tower. This was the crisis of Cade’s fortunes; his followers were tempted by an amnesty to disperse, and he himself was slain, fighting valiantly. But a more powerful, and, though not a braver, a more skilful leader, was about to take the field against the Lancastrian king and his imperious bride. Richard, duke of York, inherited the claims of the dispossessed line, and, amid the most spacious professions of fidelity and loyalty, was steadily watching the course of events, and awaiting the favourable moment for decisive action. He was a gallant and successful soldier; his campaigns in France furnish sufficient evidence of his military talents, and had he possessed, in addition to his other high qualities as a commander, the discriminating energy which distinguished his son, he might have anticipated him in the attainment of royal honours. The Lancastrian family had held the throne long enough to acquire all the right that possession can give; but the pretensions of the duke of York were, in theory, the best founded. Although the descendant of a younger branch, on the paternal side, he inherited from his mother the claims of the Mortimers, derived from the daughter of Lionel, elder brother of John of Gaunt, the founder of the house of Lancaster. The session of parliament which took place at the close of the year, in 1451, was marked by extreme violence between the two parties, and early in the following year the duke raised troops in Wales from among the retainers of the house of Mortimer, and advanced towards London. Failing in his attempt on the capital, he fell back to Dartford, where, after some negotiation, he laid down his arms, and was, after some hesitation, per-

<sup>5</sup> Hall.



mitted to retire unharmed to his own estates. To the humanity of the king, York was mainly indebted for his life. The duke of Somerset, the near relative and favourite councillor of the monarch, strongly urged extreme measures; but the mild and merciful Henry shrunk from blood, and the lords of the council were influenced by a report, that the earl of March was advancing to his father's rescue.

The year 1534 was marked by important circumstances. The queen was delivered of a son, to whom was given the popular name of Edward; but the favourable effects of this event were much diminished, by the national indignation at the disastrous issue of the war in France, when the last possessions of the English, in the south, fell into the hands of the French king. The most influential event, however, was the indisposition of Henry, who sunk into a state of mental and corporeal debility, which entirely disabled him from the slightest interference in the business of government, and threw the administration of affairs into the hands of the duke of York, who was, in March, 1454, declared protector, an office which he held but for a few months, the king recovering his health, and resuming, in the course of the same year, the exercise of his regal office. Henry was now placed in circumstances of much difficulty. One of the first acts of the protector had been the imprisonment of his great opponent, the duke of Somerset; and it might have been expected that this violent measure would be severely visited, when the recovery of the king should restore his favourite to liberty and power. Henry's conduct was, however, at once humane and wise. He strove to reconcile the rivals; and, although he must have sustained much urgency to extreme measures, from his queen and from Somerset, he found, in the kindness of his own heart, motives for firm resistance. His benevolence was ill repaid. York probably felt that, although the king was to be trusted, those about him were actuated by feelings too fiercely vindictive, and by suspicions too reasonable, to admit of a temporizing policy. He acted with decision and promptitude: at the head of his armed retainers, and seconded by the earls of Salisbury and Warwick, he advanced upon London, and encountered the royal forces at St Alban's, May 22, 1455. He gained a complete victory. Somerset, Northumberland, Clifford fell, and Henry was made prisoner. A confused series of intrigues and feuds followed this event. For a season York administered the national affairs, under his old title of protector. The king, who has been well described as "the only impartial man in his dominions,"<sup>6</sup> laboured to bring all parties to a reasonable compromise, and he so far succeeded, as to get up a showy and theatrical affair of a procession to St Paul's, in which those who had, until then, been inveterate foes, walked arm in arm, as inseparable friends: this was early in 1458, and, before the year was out, the parties were quarrelling more fiercely than ever. In 1459, the wrangling grew to fighting; Salisbury gained a victory over the royalists at Bloreheath, but, before the end of the month, the treachery of Sir Andrew Trollop compelled the Yorkists to disperse without further contest. Then came confiscations and attainders, on the part of the Lancasterians—enterprises and successes, on that of their antagonists;

<sup>6</sup> Lingard.

until the battle of Northampton, brief but bloody, gave them anew the ascendancy, and the custody of the king's person. The duke of York now ventured a farther and bolder step: he claimed the throne, as of right, unimpaired by the lapse of time during which it had been unclaimed. This demand was laid before Henry, whose reply was short and pithy—"My father was king; his father was also king; I have worn the crown forty years, from my cradle; you have all sworn fealty to me as your sovereign, and your fathers have done the like to my fathers; how then can my right be disputed?" The question of right was largely discussed in the house of lords, and various schemes were proposed for its settlement: at length it was proposed, and ratified by the agreement of both parties, that Henry should possess the crown for life, but that its reversion should be in the duke and his heirs.<sup>7</sup> The queen, however, and a powerful party still made a resolute stand for the line of Lancaster; the duke of York suffered himself to be brought to action, near Wakefield, on terms of inferiority, and paid the penalty of his rashness with his life. His youngest son, the duke of Rutland, then only in his twelfth year, was butchered after the battle by 'bloody Clifford.' The war now assumed a sterner and a higher character. Edward, the heir of York, appears to have been a consummate warrior, rapid and decisive in his movements, skilful and forecasting in his arrangements. He was, at the time of his father's death, at the head of a separate division, and, on learning that event, he hastened to intersect the line by which the victors were marching on the capital. A force, inferior to his own, but still formidable in numbers, under the command of the earl of Pembroke, pressed upon his rear, and not only impeded his movements, but threatened to place him between the two royalist armies, which were now in the field. Edward, however, was a commander too decided in character, and too prompt in evolution, to be thus caught in a trap. He turned fiercely on his pursuers, and put them to the rout with tremendous slaughter, at Mortimer's Cross, near Wigmore. The victory was followed by executions, in savage retaliation for his father's and his brother's death. This action was fought on the first of February, 1461; and, on the 17th of the same month, the success was balanced by the defeat of Warwick, at St Alban's, where he was attacked by the queen's army, and saved from irretrievable ruin only by the approach of night. Henry was found by the victors in his tent, and once more embraced his wife and son. But Edward was on his march, flushed with conquest, and the troops which fled from St Alban's had rallied on his victorious battalions; the royal army retired northwards, and he entered London in triumph. Rejecting all temporizing measures, he accepted the defiance of his antagonists, as a violation of the late agreement, and at once, amid the shouts of the Londoners, assumed the titles and offices of royalty. The day of his proclamation, March 4, 1461, is historically taken as determining the reign of Henry VI.; and, from that date, Edward IV. stands in the national annals as king of England.

If personal character, if amiable dispositions, perfect integrity, and steady piety, could, in unstable times, have given stability to the throne, the sovereignty of Henry would have been unchallenged; men

<sup>7</sup> Rot. Parl. v. 377.

of all ranks and every party would have given their willing service to a king who seems, in perfect freedom from every taint of selfishness, to have, in simple sincerity, desired the well-being of his subjects, without a reserve for his own interest. Ambition he had none—his were the virtues of private life; and it may be questioned, whether he were not happier even in his hours of imprisonment, than when seated on an unsteady and ensanguined throne. It is not, however, to be overlooked, that in perilous and uncertain seasons, dispositions of this kind may effect irreparable mischief. An indolent or weak-minded acquiescence becomes not the character or conduct of him to whose authority and management the fortunes of the commonwealth are intrusted. Henry, too, had difficulties to struggle with, before which more resolute spirits might have quailed. A turbulent people opposed him on one hand, while an imperious wife urged him on the other; and he was compelled to yield an assent to much which his kind feelings lamented, and his better judgment disapproved.

Out of all these evils good was elicited, though probably less than might have resulted from a different state of things. The interference of parliament in the government of the realm became daily more necessary and more decided. The lords assumed a lofty attitude, as the ultimate referees in extreme cases; and the commons claimed an unlimited control over the public revenue and expenditure.

### John, Duke of Bedford.

DIED A. D. 1435.

UPON the decease of Henry V., John of Lancaster, duke of Bedford, was appointed to the regency of both kingdoms, with the administration of France. Inferior to his brother, the late king, in abilities, he greatly surpassed him in the more amiable qualities of the heart, to which he also added—what was more rare in these days—great prudence and sagacity. By his judicious management of the foreign regency, the provinces recently torn from the crown of France were retained for his infant nephew, notwithstanding the impolitic attempt of Gloucester upon Hainault, and the want of harmony which perpetually disturbed the counsels and operations of the allies. It was with extreme reluctance that this cool-headed and experienced nobleman consented to the rash attempt which was made by the allies upon the provinces behind the Loire. It is not indeed easy to guess how the expedition against Orleans could have been made without his consent; but the fact is certain, that he disapproved of the whole plan of that campaign—the result of which we have detailed in the preceding memoir—for, in a letter addressed, after its failure, to the king his nephew, he uses the following language: “All things prospered with you, till the tyme of the seage of Orleans, taken in hand God knoweth by what advice.”<sup>1</sup> The death of the duchess of Bedford, sister to the duke of Burgundy, in 1432, shook the alliance which had hitherto existed between the English and Burgundians; and the precipitate union of the regent with

<sup>1</sup> Rot. Parl.



Jacquetta, or Jacqueline of Luxemburg, a vassal of the Burgundian, which took place within one year after the late duchess's death, hastened the dissolution of the confederacy. It was in vain that the cardinal of Winchester laboured to effect a reconciliation betwixt the two dukes. The high spirit of Bedford felt mortally aggrieved at the taunts with which he of Burgundy had received intelligence of the projected marriage; and the Burgundian not less keenly resented the disrespect offered to his sister's memory. Cardinal Beaufort, indeed, succeeded in bringing them both to consent to an interview at St Omer; but they eagerly availed themselves of some trifling point of etiquette, to decline a personal conference, and departed in mutual and irremediable disgust. Bedford lived to witness, and doubtless to lament, the bitter fruits of his obstinacy. The negotiations of Arras annihilated Henry's power in France; and before the congress, which met there in 1435, had broken up, the gallant Bedford, worn out by past efforts and the pressure of hopeless anxiety, expired at Rouen. He left the reputation of a prudent statesman and able general, and his memory was justly respected both by friends and foes. He was buried in the cathedral of Rouen, on the right hand of the high altar; and when, some years later, it was suggested to Louis XI. to remove his bones to a less honourable situation, that monarch is reported to have replied: "I will not war with the remains of a prince who was once a match for your fathers and mine, and who, were he now alive, would yet make the proudest of us tremble. Let his ashes rest in peace; and may the Almighty have mercy on his soul."

## Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.

DIED A. D. 1447.

ON the death of Henry V., the duke of Gloucester preferred a claim to the regency on two grounds:—first, because in the absence of his elder brother, the duke of Bedford, he was the nearest of kin to his nephew,—and secondly, because the late king, while on deathbed, had appointed him to that charge. The lords held that his demand was not founded either on law or precedent; but, to satisfy him, appointed him president of the council of regency, with the title of 'protector of the realm and church of England.' The history of his protectorate presents one continued struggle with Thomas, bishop of Winchester, afterwards cardinal. Gloucester was supported by Richard, duke of York, and the Plantagenets; the cardinal wielded the influence of the church, and had for his lay-representative, Henry Beaufort, afterwards duke of Somerset. The protector endeared himself to the nation by many popular qualities, and particularly by the liberal and munificent spirit which he displayed upon all-fitting occasions; and his connexion with the regent gave him a decided advantage, had he known how to make use of it, in every struggle with his great political rival. Unfortunately he suffered himself to be swayed in too many instances by personal considerations; and carried away by the impetuosity of his passions,

<sup>2</sup> Hall, 129.

lent himself to measures which unnerved the very arm which it was his best policy to strengthen and support. Such was his unadvised and hasty marriage with Jacqueline of Hainault, who, after having been previously betrothed to the elder brother of the king of France, bestowed her hand upon the duke of Brabant, and finally fled from her husband to the court of England, where her charms, and perhaps still more her splendid inheritance, comprising Holland, Zealand, Friesland, and Hainault, won the heart of the duke of Gloucester. Having obtained a divorce between her and the duke of Brabant from the anti-pope, the protector took this woman for his wife, and immediately laid claim to her dominions. The duke of Burgundy, though the ally of England, supported Brabant, and entered so keenly into the question of her injuries, as to defy Gloucester to single combat. The challenge was fiercely accepted; but before the duel took place, a bull from the legitimate pope appeared, declaring Jacqueline's third marriage to be null and void, and forbidding the intended combat, under pain of excommunication.

In 1428, a lady of the name of Stokes, attended by the wives of the principal citizens of London, went to the house of lords, and presented a petition against the duke, accusing him of neglecting his lawful wife, the duchess Jacqueline, and of living in open adultery with Eleanor Cobham, daughter of Reginald Lord Cobham of Sterborough. Eleanor appears to have been a woman of exquisite beauty, but highly dissolute morals. She had already lived with different noblemen before Gloucester took her under his protection. To the surprise of Europe, the duke met the protest of the fair citizens of London, by publicly acknowledging Eleanor as his wife; while Jacqueline, with equal sense of delicacy, bestowed her hand upon a gentleman called Frank of Bursellen, who was immediately seized by the Burgundians, and only regained his liberty by his wife ceding the greater part of her dominions. The cardinal eagerly improved the advantages which such infatuated conduct on the part of his rival placed within his reach; and during the absence of Gloucester in Hainault, garrisoned the tower of London, and committed it to the care of Sir Richard Wydevile, with orders 'to admit no one more powerful than himself.' When the duke returned and found the gates of the tower closed against him, he retaliated, by ordering the mayor to shut those of the city against the bishop. The next morning, the retainers of Beaufort attempted to force their way into the city, and declared that they would at least prevent the duke from quitting it. In this state of matters, the parties were with difficulty persuaded, through the intervention of the archbishop of Canterbury, to keep the peace till the return of the duke of Bedford, who was immediately called from Paris for the purpose of mediating betwixt the two rivals. The regent, on arriving in England, instantly summoned a parliament at Leicester, before which the duke of Gloucester preferred a bill of impeachment against his uncle the bishop, in which he charged him, among other things, with having hired an assassin to cut off the late king while he was yet prince of Wales. In what manner the trial proceeded, we are not informed. But the quarrel was finally adjusted in appearance through the mediation of the primate, and eight other arbitrators, whose exertions produced a show of apology from the bishop, which was accepted by Gloucester. The

mutual animosity of the two ministers was, however, too strong to be annihilated by any such feeble measures, and each continued to labour secretly to strengthen their own influence by the advancement of their dependants. In 1439, the two rivals tried their strength in the question relating to the duke of Orleans, who had been a prisoner since the battle of Agincourt, and now petitioned urgently for his liberty. The cardinal favoured, the duke opposed his petition. The king decided in favour of the former, and Gloucester lodged a solemn protest against the measure.

In the following year the duke experienced a still more humiliating defeat at the hands of his rival. An accusation of sorcery and treason was brought against his concubine, Eleanor. Roger Bolingbroke, one of the duke's chaplains, had been accused of necromancy, and on his apprehension declared that it was at Eleanor's instigation that he first applied to the study of magic. An investigation followed, and an indictment of treason was soon afterwards found against Bolingbroke and Southwell, a canon of St Paul's, as principals, and Eleanor as an accessory. The former were charged with having prepared, at the solicitation of Eleanor, a waxen image of the king, and to have exposed it to a slow heat, with the design, according to the principles of necromancy, of doing serious injury to the health of the person it represented. Southwell died before his trial; Bolingbroke was executed; and Eleanor did penance for her crime by walking 'hoodless, save a kerchief,' through the streets of London to St Paul's, where she offered a taper. She was then committed to the custody of Sir John Stanley, who sent her to his castle of Chester, whence she is traced to Kenilworth, where she disappears from history.<sup>1</sup> The proud and lofty spirit of Gloucester must have burned at the disgrace thus inflicted on him at the instigation of his rival, but he was 'obliged to take all patiently, and said little,' for the cardinal had now, by his insidious representations, effectually poisoned the ear of the credulous monarch against his uncle.

The final attack on Gloucester was made in the year following that of the king's marriage. "It is a transaction," says Mackintosh, "buried in deep obscurity, of which a probable account may be hazarded, but of which little, except the perpetration of an atrocious murder, can be affirmed with certainty." The old chroniclers do not hesitate to attribute Gloucester's death to the malevolence of the queen and Suffolk, aided by the duke of Buckingham, and the two cardinals of Winchester and York.<sup>2</sup> The administration of public affairs had now fallen into the hands of William de la Pole, earl and afterwards duke of Suffolk, who soon saw in Gloucester a popular and formidable rival, and to rid himself of him, is supposed to have eagerly adopted the policy of his patron, the cardinal, and lost no opportunity of infusing into the mind of Henry suspicions of his uncle's loyalty. On the 10th of February, 1447, the duke repaired from his castle of Devizes to Bury, to attend the opening of a parliament which Henry had summoned to meet there. The assembly opened in the usual form, and the first day passed in tranquillity; but on the morning of the second, the lord viscount Beaumont, as constable of England, arrested the duke of Gloucester for divers acts of high treason. Seventeen days later he was found dead in his

<sup>1</sup> Ellis's Royal Letters, 2d Series, i. 107.

<sup>2</sup> Hall.



prison. Reports were spread that he had died of apoplexy, and his body was exhibited to public view to show that it bore no marks of violence; but suspicion whispered that there had been foul play in the business. "Some," says old Hall, "judged him to be strangled: others write that he was stifled or smouldered between two fether beddes." No legal inquiry was instituted into the circumstances of his death, nor does such seem to have been demanded. His friends made several efforts to clear his memory from the stain of treason, but the king remained obstinate; the bill was repeatedly thrown out, and a great part of his estates were conferred on Suffolk and his adherents.

This ill-fated prince was the Mæcenas of his age, and to his encouragement of literature England is deeply indebted. He is supposed to have been the founder of the Bodleian library, and under the patronage which he so readily extended to men of letters, many learned foreigners were induced to settle in England, bringing with them the arts and learning of the west and south. His vices were many, but he also possessed some splendid virtues, which cast a redeeming lustre over his character; his kindliness of disposition won for him the epithet of 'the good;' while his undeviating and impartial justice procured him the still more honourable appellation of 'the father of his country.'

## Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury.

BORN A. D. 1372.—DIED A. D. 1453.

THIS distinguished warrior—second son to Richard Lord Talbot—was born at Blechmore in Shropshire, in the reign of Richard II. He married Maud, the eldest of the two daughters and co-heiresses of Sir Thomas Neville. In the first year of Henry V. he was committed to the tower, but the nature of his offence is not upon record, and he appears to have been but a short time in confinement. He was present at the siege of Caen in 1417, and afterwards distinguished himself at the successive sieges of Rouen, Mans, and Pontoroso. At the ever-memorable siege of Orleans, Talbot displayed such resistless valour that his courage became proverbial even with the enemy. On the capture of the earl of Suffolk, Talbot succeeded to the command of the English forces, and retired towards Paris, but was overtaken at Patay. On this occasion, Sir John Fastolfe advised Talbot to continue his retreat as expeditiously as possible, but the latter refused to show his back to the enemy, and was in consequence made prisoner, after a sharp action, with the loss of twelve hundred men. After a tedious captivity of three years and a half, the duke of Bedford found means to have him exchanged for Xaintrailles, a French officer of great reputation. He now again hastened to the field, and took several fortified places with his accustomed skill and bravery. The capture of Pontoise was effected by him in a singular manner. In the beginning of 1437, the weather was so extremely cold, that the generals on both sides suspended military operations. But Talbot having collected a body of troops, and caused them to put white clothes or shirts over their other clothes, in order that they might not be easily distinguished from the snow with which the ground was then covered, brought them by a

night march up to the walls of Pontoise, and making an unexpected attack upon the garrison, made himself master of that important place. His next conquests were Harfleur, Tankerville, Crotoy, Longueville, Carles, and Manille; for all which important services he was advanced to the dignity of earl of Shrewsbury, in May, 1442. He was afterwards appointed to the command in Ireland, with the title of earl of Wexford. But his presence was soon found indispensable for carrying on the war in France. His promptitude and valour protracted the fall of Rouen a brief space. Perceiving that the French had gained a rampart which had been entrusted to the charge of the citizens, he rushed to the spot, precipitated himself upon the assailants, hurling the foremost of them into the ditch beneath, and having repelled the enemy, put the treacherous sentinels to the sword. In 1452, we find the veteran warrior—now in his eightieth year—again taking the field, and performing his usual wonders. Landing with four thousand men, and supported by the good-will of the Gascons, he advanced upon Bourdeaux, whereupon the French garrison, frightened, as Fuller quaintly observes, by the bare fame of his approach, fled from the spot. Chatillon, in Perigord, having surrendered soon afterwards to his arms, Charles despatched a formidable force to recover it, and Talbot hastened to sustain his capture. By the celerity of his movements he surprised and cut to pieces a French detachment; but on approaching the body of the enemy he found it advantageously posted and well-prepared to sustain his attack, being strongly entrenched and provided with a field of artillery. Undismayed, however, by the fearful odds, and flushed by his recent success, the veteran hazarded an assault, and was so gallantly supported by his men, that for a time the balance of victory hung in suspense. But a shot having struck down their general, and Count Penthievre coming up at the critical moment with fresh troops, the English gave way and retreated on all sides. Talbot was first buried at Rouen in France, but his body was afterwards removed to Whitchurch in Shropshire. He has been called ‘the English Achilles,’ and seems to have merited the title, if indomitable valour and nearly uniform success in his personal encounters might confer it.

### **Sir John Fastolfe.**

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1378.—DIED A. D. 1459.

SIR JOHN FASTOLFE, whose name has obtained so whimsical a species of immortality from the unwarrantable liberty taken with it by our great dramatist, was descended from an ancient and honourable English family in the county of Norfolk. Being left a minor, he became the ward of Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk. On the accession of Henry IV., he entered the service of the duke of Clarence, whom he accompanied to Ireland. During his residence in that country, he married the widow of Sir Stephen Seroope. He commenced his military career in Henry the Fifth’s expedition against France, and won his spurs by his honourable services in the war which followed. For having retaken the town of Meulent from the French, he was created a banneret, and entrusted with an extensive lieutenancy; and shortly

afterwards was honoured with a knight-companionship of the garter, having been adjudged more worthy of that high honour than Sir John Radcliffe, his gallant companion-in-arms. Monstrelet has affirmed, that for subsequent cowardice, the duke of Bedford deprived the new knight-companion of his garter, but this is altogether a misrepresentation of facts. Fastolfe never was tried for any charge, and, therefore, could not be degraded; he never ceased to enjoy the confidence of the duke; nor, if he had, was it in the duke's power to deprive him of what was the gift of his sovereign; and as to the alleged piece of misconduct, his retreat, namely at Patay, when Talbot and Hungerford were taken prisoners, the movement by which he saved himself from sharing their fate, has been pronounced by good judges to have been a very masterly display of military science, and not less worthy of praise than any of those actions by which he had previously earned the reputation of a brave and skilful officer. In 1431, Sir John accompanied the regent into France, and was soon afterwards despatched on an embassy to the council of Basle. When Richard, duke of York, succeeded to the command in Normandy, he evinced his sense of Fastolfe's merits and services by bestowing upon him an annual pension of £20.

At length, after having borne arms in the service of his country, during a period of above forty years, he retired in 1440 to his ancestral estates in England, and settled at Caister in Norfolk, where he built a very splendid castle, which he rendered the scene of much hospitality and magnificence. The Paston letters have thrown considerable light on Sir John's private history and character, of which Miss Roberts has diligently availed herself, in her memoirs of the rival houses of York and Lancaster. From the quotations inserted in that work, it would appear that while Fastolfe proved himself a liberal master and a bounteous patron of the clergy, he did not disdain to avail himself of some of those questionable means of increasing his worldly estates, which the manners and customs of the age allowed. One of the Paston letters displays his eager anxiety to procure the wardship of a young heir, and the management of the minor's estate; and in another, Fastolfe, though loaded with wealth and honours, the result of his French campaigns, speaks of his services as 'never yet guerdoned, or rewarded.' Yet this poor, unrewarded veteran died possessed of sixteen manors, landed estates in forty-nine different places, and coined money to the value of about £40,000 of our present currency!<sup>1</sup> It was his well-known wealth, probably, that suggested to Queen Margaret and her ministers the charge of treason against our knight on the occasion of Cade's rebellion. The attempt, however, failed, and Sir John was allowed to spend his declining years in peace. He died, after a lingering illness, in 1459. His funeral obsequies were celebrated with much pomp at Norfolk, where he was buried in the abbey-church of St Bennett.

<sup>1</sup> *Archæologia*, vol. **xxi**.



## Sir Thomas Lyttleton.

DIED A. D. 1481.

THE circumstances under which England was placed by her early wars and internal dissensions, laid the foundation for that complicated legal system which has brought into action so many powerful and accomplished minds. The subject of the present sketch has an ample right to be ranked as the head of the numerous band of excellent men who have laboured to regulate and explain this system, the evidences he has left of his knowledge and ability having stood the test of professional examination through many generations of active inquirers. This distinguished lawyer was born about the beginning of the fifteenth century, and was the eldest son of Henry Westcote, Esq., and Elizabeth, the daughter and sole heiress of Thomas Luttleton or Lyttleton, a person of great wealth at Frankley in Worcestershire, and according to whose will his daughter's eldest son was to take the name and bear the arms of Lyttleton. It is not known in which university Sir Thomas was educated, but having completed his studies, he became a member of the Inner Temple, and was some time after appointed to the honourable office of reader. The ability which he displayed at this early period of his career introduced him to the notice of Henry the Sixth, and he was created steward or judge of the palace or marshalsea. In the May of 1454, he obtained the rank of king's sergeant, and was made one of the judges of the northern circuit.

The period in which he had to exercise these important functions was one of almost unequalled disorder and turbulence. It was not long after his appointment to the bench that that fearful struggle began between the houses of York and Lancaster, which converted their quarrel into a war, and caused the ruin of the noblest and most wealthy families in the kingdom. Did no other testimony remain to prove the worth and integrity of Sir Thomas Lyttleton's character, the fact that throughout these troubles he was equally respected by both parties, would be sufficient for that purpose. The high legal situation he occupied, made it incumbent on him not to interfere in matters which might either disturb his own steadiness of judgment, or render his decisions the subject of suspicion. That he did not, is clear from the circumstance which has been stated, and we accordingly find, that when Edward the Fourth ascended the throne, he was among the first whom the new monarch received into favour, and was allowed to retain the offices which had been bestowed upon him by the unfortunate Henry.

In the year 1466, he was made one of the judges of the common pleas, and took the Northamptonshire circuit. About the same time, also, he received another mark of royal favour in the shape of a writ directed to the commissioners of customs for the ports of London, Bristol, and Kingston-upon-Hull, whereby they were ordered to pay him a hundred and ten marks per annum to support his dignity, a hundred and six shillings eleven pence halfpenny to buy him a furred robe, and sixty-six shillings and sixpence more for another robe, technically called *Linura*. About nine years after, he was made a knight of the

Bath, and while exercising his important duties as a judge, undertook, for the instruction of one of his sons, his celebrated work on the Institutes of the Laws of England—a treatise of which it was eloquently said by Sir Edward Coke, “that it is a work of as absolute perfection in its kind, and as free from error as any he had ever known to be written of any human learning;” and that it is “the ornament of the common law, and the most perfect and absolute work that ever was written in any human science.”<sup>1</sup>

It is supposed that this treatise was finished but a short time previous to his death, which occurred on the twenty-third of August 1481, the day after his last testament was dated. He left three sons, the issue of his marriage with the daughter of Sir Philip Chetwin, and the honourable reputation he had acquired was worthily kept up by the learning and dignity which long characterized his family. His funeral took place in Worcester cathedral, where a monument was raised to his memory, and the parish-churches of Frankley and Hales-Owen were adorned with his portrait. “There,” remarks his learned commentator, “the grave and reverend countenance of the outward man may be seen, but he hath left this book as a figure of that higher and nobler part, that is, of the excellent and rare endowments of his mind, especially in the profound knowledge of the fundamental laws of this realm. He that diligently reads this his excellent work, shall behold the child and figure of his mind, which the more often he beholds in the visual line, and well observes him, the more shall he justly admire the judgment of our author and increase his own.” But the greatest praise, perhaps, which a writer or commentator ever passed upon an author, is that contained in this declaration of Sir Edward: “Before I entered into any of these parts of our institutes, I, acknowledging myne own weakness and want of judgment to undertake so great works, directed my humble suit and prayer to the author of all goodness and wisdom, out of the Book of Wisdom: ‘Oh, Father and God of mercy, give me wisdom, the assistant of thy seates: Oh, send her out of thy holy heavens, and from the seate of thy greatness, that she may be present with me, and labour with me, that I may know what is pleasing unto thee.’” The deference paid to the rules laid down in this work by the most enlightened lawyers of different periods, confirms all that Sir Edward has said on its merits. It is recorded, that four of the greatest judges in the reign of James the First, that is, Sir Henry Hobart, and the judges Warburton, Wynch, and Nichols, upon giving their opinion on a disputed point, publicly declared, that “they owed so great reverence to Lyttleton, that they would not have his case disputed or questioned.” But it is not simply for the legal knowledge displayed in this celebrated work that the author merits the high fame he has acquired, he was learned not merely in all the branches of his profession, but in every species of literature that could strengthen or enlarge his

<sup>1</sup> In order to show the little respect which was as yet felt for the English language by the lawyers of this period, it may be mentioned, that the ‘Institutions’ were written in French. It also appears, that the work was not published till a considerable time after it was written, both the author and his son Richard, for whom it was composed, being dead before it was given to the public. The first edition of it was published at Rouen, but as few books were sent to press at that early period but such as were generally esteemed, it is probable that it had already acquired great popularity by circulation in manuscript before it appeared in print.

mind. That he was one of the acutest logicians of the age is amply proved by the manner in which he has argued the most subtle points of his science; and that he possessed the varied erudition necessary for the efficient exercise of the most important duties with which a man in power can be charged, is asserted in the emphatic eulogy with which Sir Edward Coke concludes his panegyric.

It is worthy of observation, that at the period when Sir Thomas flourished, England possessed besides himself several men alike eminent in the profession of jurisprudence. Among these were Sir Richard Newton, Sir John Priscot, Sir Robert Danby, William Ascough, Sir John Fortescue, Sir John Markham, and others of similar celebrity. Before the time of these distinguished civilians, the English law was but a maze of doubt and difficulty. They contributed to clear up many of its mysteries by their strong good sense, by the fidelity with which they laboured at their judicial duties, and by the learning which most of them brought to the exercise of their functions. A higher degree of importance, therefore, now began to be attached to the legal character than it had ever yet enjoyed; and from this era, the civilians of England are seen endowed with a rank and influence which rendered them one of the most powerful classes in the state. Of those who flourished with Sir Thomas Lyttleton, some appear to have taken a much deeper share in the political struggles of the times than himself. This was especially the case with Sir John Fortescue, of whom we now subjoin a brief notice.

## *Sir John Fortescue.*

DIED CIRC. A. D. 1485.

THIS eminent English lawyer was descended from an ancient Devonshire family, and third son of Henry Fortescue, lord-chief-justice of Ireland. The time and place of his birth is matter of uncertainty. He is supposed to have been educated at Oxford, and to have studied law in Lincoln's inn. In 1430 he was made sergeant-at-law, and in 1441 was appointed king's sergeant. From this latter period preferments were showered upon him. The next year he was appointed chief-justice of the king's bench, with a special annuity from the privy purse for the better maintenance of his rank and station. He remained in great favour with Henry VI., and served him faithfully in all his troubles. In 1643 he accompanied Queen Margaret and Prince Edward into Lorrain, where he helped to alleviate the bitterness of their exile by his counsels and presence, and drew up for the instruction of the young prince his celebrated treatise, '*De laudibus legum Angliæ*,' in which he endeavours to impress his pupil with the just idea, that the constitution of England was a limited monarchy. In this work—which, though received with great applause by the jurists of the day, was not published till the reign of Henry VIII.—Sir John styles himself '*Cancellarius Angliæ*,' but as his name does not appear in the patent rolls, it is probable, as Selden suggests, that he received this dignity from the fugitive monarch during his exile in Scotland. Returning to England with the queen, Sir John was taken prisoner on



the defeat of her party at Tewksbury, and, though Edward IV. made rather a cruel use of his victory, yet he not only spared the life of our venerable jurist, but even, soon afterwards, received him into favour. Softened by this kindness, and probably regarding the hopes of the Lancastrian party as now for ever annihilated, Sir John not only began to acknowledge Edward's title to the crown, but wrote in defence of it. It does not appear, however, that he ever departed from his original views of the English constitution as a limited monarchy. Some of his manuscripts are still preserved in public libraries. They bear the following titles: 'Defensio juris domus Lancastriæ,' 'Genealogy of the House of Lancaster,' 'Of the title of the House of York,' 'Genealogiæ Regum Scotiæ,' 'A Dialogue between Understanding and Faith.' He appears to have withdrawn into the country some years before his death, which is supposed to have occurred at Ebburton in Gloucestershire, in the church of which parish his remains were interred. His editor, Fortescue Aland, has said of him, that "all good men and lovers of the English constitution speak of him with honour, and that he still lives, in the opinion of all true Englishmen, in as high esteem and reputation as any judge that ever sat in Westminster hall."

From the accounts generally given of this eminent lawyer, he may, indeed, be regarded as deserving, like Lyttleton, the gratitude of posterity for having greatly contributed to promote the fair interpretation and proper administration of the fundamental laws of the realm, but doubts have been expressed as to the propriety or honesty of his political conduct. It has been asked, how, as the chief minister of Henry VI., he could favour the cruel persecution of the duke of Gloucester? Or how, as an upright man, he could write in defence, which it appears he did, first of one and then of another of the rival houses? The character of Sir Thomas Lyttleton, on the other hand, is left unstained by suspicions of this nature, and from the praise accorded him for the practice of all the virtues of domestic and social life, as well as for his learning and ability, he may be considered as meriting in every way the reverence of posterity.

## Edward IV.

BORN A. D. 1440.—DIED A. D. 1482.

EDWARD had now two important points in his favour,—the possession of the capital, and a title conferred according to the usual constitutional forms. He was, however, sovereign of only half his kingdom: if the southern and middle counties acknowledged his dominion, the northern provinces were warm in the Lancastrian cause. Notwithstanding the dissolute and voluptuous habits which had at an early period been permitted to obtain the mastery, Edward's was a character of singular energy and self-possession when under the impulse of a stirring motive, and he was fully aware that, in the present instance, nothing short of instant and decided effort was adequate to the crisis. Three days after his accession, his advanced guard, under the orders of the earl of Clifford, quitted London for the north; in five days more, he followed in person with the remainder of his army; and at

Pontefract, he passed in review nearly forty-nine thousand soldiers. Margaret's force was larger; her general, the duke of Somerset, was at the head of sixty thousand men, encamped near York. After some previous fighting, in which Clifford was killed, the main armies met, and the field of Towton was the scene of a bloodier fight than the civil broils of England had yet witnessed. No quarter was given on either side. The battle began in the evening, and was maintained with untiring rancour through the night until noon of the following day, when Edward, having been compelled by the superior numbers of the enemy, to bring up all his reserves, was making his last efforts, but, at the critical period of nearly entire exhaustion on both sides, the duke of Norfolk brought up a reinforcement, which decided the victory against the queen's army.<sup>1</sup> The slaughter was terrible: the retreat of the Lancastrians was intercepted by a river, and the pursuit of the Yorkists was unrelenting. The number of those who fell varies, in the different estimates, from 30,000 to 40,000. Henry and his queen, with the dukes of Somerset and Exeter, fled to Scotland.

After some farther movements in prosecution of his victory, Edward returned to London, leaving Lord Montague to watch the Lancastrians. This general raised the siege of Carlisle, beleagured by the Scots, whose alliance Margaret had purchased by the surrender of Berwick. On the 29th of June, Edward was crowned at Westminster, and met his parliament as the acknowledged king of England. The session was distinguished by nothing so much as by the number of bills of attainder which were passed, involving all the more distinguished adherents to the house of Lancaster in one common ruin. Margaret, however, was still active, and with an army of French and Scottish auxiliaries gave employment in the north to Edward's generals, and called Edward himself once more to the scene of action, where, however, his stay was brief. It was during this season of perilous enterprise that the thousand-times-told adventure of the forest bandit is said to have happened to Margaret and her son. In 1464, the Lancastrians hazarded a more decided effort, but their array was broken up by the activity of Nevil, Earl Montague, who routed Percy at Hedgeley Moor, and the duke of Somerset at Hexham. Both leaders were slain,—the first on the field, Somerset on the scaffold. Henry himself, after evading, during more than a year, all attempts to discover his concealment, was betrayed by a monk, and, in July, 1465, became the prisoner of Edward. The king had now leisure for measures of general policy, and negotiated treaties of amity with nearly all the leading European sovereigns. His chief advisers, in all matters of state, appear to have been the brothers of the family of Nevil, the earls of Warwick and Montague, the last in particular was his especial favourite. It has, however, seldom occurred, that such a connexion as that between Edward and the Nevils, has been lasting, and the present case affords no exception to the general rule. Edward's marriage may probably be taken as the remote cause of the breaking up of a union apparently so strong in the mutual attachment and common interest of the parties. It was the king's misfortune to be conspicuously endowed with exterior graces; and these gave him, in his intercourse with

<sup>1</sup> Hearne's Fragment, as cited by Turner.

females, advantages which he abused, until he became wholly possessed by a spirit of reckless libertinism : his appetites were his masters, and the grosser sensualities of the table were added to what are usually deemed more refined gratifications of sense. The chase alone relieved, by intervals of manly exercise and exertion, the course of debauchery in which he was now wasting his fine constitution, enbruting his moral faculties, and debilitating his powerful mind. Thus given over to habits of self-indulgence, it was his chance to encounter a lovely and fascinating woman, the widow of a Lancastrian officer, who had fallen in civil broil. His passions were kindled, but the lady—whether from virtuous or from interested motives may well be doubted—rejected every licentious proposal, and at length the amorous king made her his wife; an act which gave great and just offence to Warwick, who had been urging a marriage of policy. The doubt suggested in the previous sentence, is not unadvisedly offered, for the conduct of the queen and her family was marked by a spirit of ambition and rapacity rarely equalled in the records of favouritism. A prudent affectation of humility and disinterestedness might have done much towards soothing disappointment and pacifying discontent ; but even decency was disregarded in the exultation of unanticipated advancement. A large and hungry family clamoured for the good things in the gift of their powerful relative, and the gratified voluptuary was neither slow nor niggard in his benefactions. The five sisters of Elizabeth Wydevile were made—probably more in constraint than in liking on the part of the bridegroom—the wives of so many wealthy and powerful young noblemen ; her brothers caught titled heiresses in the scramble, and the younger was fortunate enough to capture a dowager duchess, rich and eighty. Lord Mountjoy was displaced from the treasurership of England, in favour of the queen's father ; and the staff of lord-high-constable, wrested from the grasp of the earl of Worcester, was consigned to the same ready hand. This ‘fell swoop,’ in the way of monopoly, struck despair to the hearts of the needy and expectant, who always throng a court, and, had it done no more than this, little harm had been wrought ; but there were others who looked on with a loftier and more menacing displeasure—the men whose abilities entitled them to a share in the administration of the realm, and whose station gave them a vantage ground for the attainment of the objects of their legitimate ambition. Edward, in his doting favouritism, even ventured to lay hand upon that from which gratitude, no less than policy, should have taught him to abstain. The younger brother of the Nevils had been made archbishop of York, and from him, on some ground of jealousy against himself and his brothers, the king resumed two manors of which the prelate was the grantee. Various circumstances occurred to widen the breach between Edward and the earl of Warwick, whose daughter had lately been married, much to the king's annoyance, to George, duke of Clarence, the second of the three royal brothers. The administration of the Wydeviles seems to have been, from whatever cause, unpopular, and insurrections broke out, in which the father and brother of the queen were seized and put to death. Without taking an ostensible share in these tumults, Warwick reaped their full advantage ; and the result of all this folly, misgovernment, and treason was, that the king became, in 1469, the prisoner of the earl. Considerable obscurity rests



upon these events, and much secret history requires to be brought to light, before they can be adequately explained. Although it nowhere appears that the insurrections in question were directly instigated by Warwick, yet they happened most opportunely for his interests; he was ready to turn them to his own ends; and at his orders the rebels returned quietly to their homes. He was not, however, acting in behalf of the house of Lancaster, since he put down, with the utmost promptitude and rigour, in the name of Edward, an attempt in its favour, made by its partizans in the north. It appears probable that Warwick had overrated his own influence, and that he found, in the disposal of a prisoner like Edward, a problem too difficult for his solution. 'The king's name' was 'a tower of strength' only in the king's cause; and though the upstart and overweening favourites had made themselves odious to the people, Edward himself was a popular monarch, and his subjects were by no means inclined to throw him aside at the mere mandate of Warwick. Be all this as it may, the earl found himself compelled to release his thrall, and a reconciliation, apparently cordial, took place. This was toward the close of 1469, yet, early in the following year, Edward was saved from a fresh and probably fatal imprisonment, only by intelligence whispered in his ear, by his own presence of mind, and by the swiftness of his horse. Clarence and Warwick now acted in open rebellion, but so rapid and well-directed were the movements of the king, that they were counteracted in every effort, and compelled at last to quit the country, and seek safety in France. Here the turbulent earl, much to the dissatisfaction of Clarence, negotiated under the auspices of the French king, with Margaret. His daughter was accepted as the bride of the heir of Lancaster, and active preparations were made for the invasion of England. Edward, in the mean time, was indemnifying himself for his late anxieties and exertions, by a total neglect of business, and an entire surrender of all his faculties to enervating pleasure. In this state, he was surprised by the landing of Warwick, who moved on with such celerity, as to leave the king, abandoned by his troops, and betrayed by Montague, who had hitherto professed friendship, no resource but flight. After encountering much danger in his brief voyage, he landed in Holland, October, 1470: the queen took sanctuary in Westminster. Warwick, 'the king-maker,' was now at the height of his success: he entered London in triumph, released Henry from the Tower, and proceeded, in the usual course, to reverse attainders, and reward his friends with the spoils of his enemies. To his honour be it mentioned, that, although the war of the Roses had been marked by a fearful system of sanguinary reprisal, excepting in one righteous instance, he shed no blood.

But Edward's character, sunk and degraded while prosperity smiled upon him, was of intense energy and strength when roused by adverse circumstances. In this crisis of his fortunes, he acted on the boldest construction of the antique monition—*contra audentior ito*. Obtaining from his ally, the duke of Burgundy, the means of raising and transporting troops, he sailed for England, entered the Humber, and landed at Ravenspur, March 14, 1471, with about 2000 determined men; his brother, the duke of Gloucester, was with him. No one joined him, but his resolution was taken, and he moved boldly on

York, giving out everywhere that he was come solely to claim his father's inheritance, as duke of York; a pretext which probably availed him much, by furnishing the timid or neutral with a pretext for non-interference. From York he marched to Doncaster, passing, on his route, near Pomfret, where lay Lord Montague, at the head of a force which Dr Lingard, without any qualification, affirms to have been "sufficient to overwhelm the invaders." This, however, is utterly improbable: the brother of Warwick was an able and enterprising commander, nor can there be any question of his fidelity to the cause he had now embraced. It is quite clear that he only abstained from fighting because his soldiers were unequal, either in numbers or quality, to the hazards of a conflict with a band so determined and so resolutely led, as that which defiled within four miles of his castle walls. At Nottingham, he was joined by six hundred men; at Newark, the duke of Exeter and 4000 men fled before him, without striking a blow; at Leicester his little army had increased to upwards of 6000 good soldiers, and he marched at once on Coventry, where Warwick had sheltered himself behind the strong fortifications of the place. Edward here challenged the 'king-maker' to personal conflict, and on the earl's refusal, took possession of the town of Warwick, where he was joined by his brother Clarence. He was now at the head of an effective force, and, resuming the royal title, he pushed forward for the capital, which he entered on the 11th of April. Warwick and Montague had by this time formed a junction, and were following him on the road to London, when the king drove in their advance at Barnet, in the neighbourhood of which town the battle was fought, April 14, 1471. There appears to be little doubt of the Lancastrian superiority in point of numbers; but this disadvantage was more than compensated by the conduct and brilliant valour of Edward. His left wing was outflanked, and, notwithstanding the gallant efforts of Lord Hastings, driven from the field; but this disaster was more than retrieved by the king's fierce and decisive charge on the Lancastrian centre under Somerset, and by the success of the right wing of the Yorkists, commanded by the duke of Gloucester, who succeeded in turning the enemies' left, though the great earl himself was there. Both the Nevils fell, and this, the death of Warwick especially, was of higher importance than the mere victory could by any possibility have been. The 'king-maker' bore a charmed name, that, in common belief, secured success to whatever cause he might undertake. Edward's work, however, was not yet done: on the precise day of the battle of Barnet, Margaret landed at Weymouth, and was joined by her partisans, including the duke of Somerset, and the other leaders who had escaped from the rout at Barnet. A powerful army was collected, and it became a matter of question whether it were wiser to make for the northern counties, where the house of Lancaster had a powerful interest, or to move at once for London. In either case it was necessary to evade the vigilance of Edward, who was placed in the difficult situation of making his anxiety to come to immediate action subordinate to the necessity for watching the two roads to the north and to the capital. He manœuvred with uncommon skill, and, by two or three forced marches, compelled his enemies to make a final stand at Tewkesbury, on the 4th of May. Their position was exceedingly strong, but Edward ordered an immediate attack, and, after

a severe conflict, which the ability and bravery of Somerset, the Lancastrian commander, rendered for some time doubtful, obtained a splendid victory. Many of the leaders of the defeated party took sanctuary, and the king at first promised to spare their lives, but afterward ordered their place of refuge to be forced, and this act of violence was speedily followed by their public execution. A yet darker deed has been charged upon his memory ; it is asserted by the greater number of historians, that when the heir of Lancaster, a fine youth of seventeen, the only son of Henry and Margaret, was brought prisoner to the tent of Edward, and to a taunting question made a spirited reply, the savage victor struck him on the face with his gauntleted hand, a signal too well understood by Clarence and Gloucester, who completed, with their swords, the murderous transaction. There are, however, other authorities which speak of the prince's death as occurring in the field. Henry did not long survive his son ; on the 22d of May, he *died* in the Tower, and general belief has fixed the guilt of his death on the duke of Gloucester ; but independently of this common credence, there does not appear sufficient evidence for the imputation, while there are strong reasons for acquitting him of a crime unprofitable to himself, and tending only to strengthen the cause of those who stood between him and the throne. If Henry were murdered, his fate was, no doubt, hastened by the vigorous efforts of Lord Falconbridge, in behalf of the fallen party, and which were at one moment formidable enough to call Edward abruptly from the scene of his triumphs at Tewkesbury. Margaret of Anjou was made a prisoner, and, after a lapse of five years, obtained her release, on payment of a ransom : she died in 1482. Wretched, indeed, must have been the remaining years of that proud and unrelenting princess. The blood of her brave and loyal nobles had been poured out like water in her cause ; her husband and her son had perished in the sanguinary struggle ; and, with all this, she must have felt that, in her savage treatment of the duke of York, she had but taught " bloody instructions, which, being taught, returned to plague the inventor."

Edward was now seated firmly on his throne, but his greatness was in the hour of action, not in the season of repose. He commenced a war with France ; but his ministers were bribed by Louis XI., and he suffered himself to be persuaded into a pacific course. But a darker cloud was hovering over him ; the domestic curse which filled his family with feuds and murders, began its deadly work, and its first dire impulse was the shedding of a brother's blood. The duke of Clarence appears to have been weak, selfish, and ambitious. During the life of Warwick, he suffered himself to be made the mere tool of that aspiring noble, and after Edward's restoration, he quarrelled with the duke or Gloucester on pecuniary matters. In this variance, which was never made up, he was decidedly in the wrong ; in the affair which led to his destruction the blame lay with the king. Clarence was highly popular, and this was enough to keep alive a spirit of jealousy in his brother, who became suspicious of his intentions, and when a fair chance presented itself to the duke of obtaining the hand of the heiress of Burgundy, interfered to prevent it, instigated, probably in part by the queen, who was anxious to procure so advantageous a match for her brother,



Lord Rivers.<sup>1</sup> Farther dissensions, and, it may be, domestic intrigue, led to a fatal catastrophe; Clarence was condemned by the house of peers, and put to death in the tower, February 17th, 1478. Reckless and hard of heart as Edward had become, he was constrained to feel that, Cain-like, he had slain his brother: from that time he became more and more irritable, and frequently lamented that no one had been found to intercede for the life of Clarence. His own death was at no great distance. In the midst of active preparations for the invasion of France, he was seized with a malady which terminated his life, April 9, 1482.

Such were the leading events which distinguished the career of this man of brilliant, though perverted faculties. His eminent mental and personal endowments he degraded into the mere auxiliaries and incitements to sensual gratification, and his popular manners were but the specious covering to a vindictive and despotic temper. His parliament knew that he was not to be trifled with; and during the latter years of his reign he established a system of police which placed the entire realm under a jealous and severe inspection. Yet, amid these unfavourable circumstances, the nation advanced in all that constitutes national prosperity. It may be questionable whether this were owing to a judicious administration of the powers of government, or to the energy and activity of the native character; but the fact is certain.

## Edward V.

BORN A. D. 1470.—DIED A. D. 1483.

LESS than three months included the entire term between the accession and deposition of this young prince, and with little more than this brief notice the history of his nominal reign might be dismissed, were it not for the convenience of making this the place for a general exhibition of the state of parties and circumstances at this eventful season. The queen and her family had, as has been already intimated, availed themselves of their situation to accumulate among themselves and their friends the chief offices of influence and profit; and he late king, in the contemplation of his approaching death, made all his dispositions with a view to the confirmation of their authority. Their friends, however, seem not to have been numerous, and the more powerful of the nobility, offended probably by the rise and rapacity of an inferior family, were hostile to their claims, nor did they adopt a course of policy either wise or vigorous enough to meet the urgency of the crisis. The proposal to surround the young king with an efficient body of troops was overruled. The queen's brother, Lord Rivers, suffered himself to be circumvented and arrested by the dukes of Gloucester and Buckingham, without means of resistance, or chance of escape. Respecting the views of such other of the nobles as were active in political affairs, it is not easy to speak with decision. Lord Hastings had been the personal friend of Edward IV., and was now, as it should seem, faithful to the cause of his son; but he was the determined enemy of the queen's

<sup>1</sup> Hall.

family, and gave his effective assistance to the scheme for their destruction. In this state of things, the prospect of civil commotion became hourly more threatening, and nothing prevented its immediate outbreak but the bold, rapid, and unscrupulous conduct of the duke of Gloucester. That prince was, when his brother died, in the north, and on hearing the news, caused his nephew to be proclaimed. He then set off immediately for the capital, and on his road became master of the royal person, maintaining the most respectful demeanour, and professing the most devoted loyalty. In London, the council of state met at the tower, where the young king resided, but a more subtle and more powerful divan held its consultations at Crosby house, the residence of Gloucester, who had been appointed protector. The work of usurpation was hurried fiercely on, nor were even the forms of justice observed in its bloody transactions. Lord Hastings was beheaded without a trial, on the 13th of January, 1483, and as little ceremony was used in the execution of Earl Rivers, Lord Grey, and Sir Thomas Vaughan. The next step was to gain possession of the queen's younger son, the duke of York, and these preliminary outrages having removed all present difficulties, after a little manœuvring, the mask was thrown aside, and the duke of Gloucester assumed the title and the state of royalty. His accession bears date, June 26th, 1483.

### Richard, Duke of York.

BORN A. D. 1410.—DIED A. D. 1460.

By the death of Edmund, earl of March, the hereditary pretensions of the house of Clarence became vested in Richard Plantagenet, duke of York, the son of Anne Mortimer. Richard, however, was only fourteen years of age at this time, and, therefore, did not excite any serious apprehensions on the part of Henry VI., then filling the throne of England. During the contentions which ended in Gloucester's death, the duke was engaged in foreign service in France; but, on the demise of that nobleman, he was called upon to relinquish his post in Normandy, in favour of the duke of Somerset. This invidious preference provoked the indignation of York, who shortly afterwards impeached the duke of Somerset for the loss of Normandy and Aquitaine. It was, however, fortunate for York, that Somerset should have thus superseded him, for he was thereby saved encountering that shame and obloquy which the inevitable surrender of the possessions of England in France drew down upon his successor. His appointment to the government of Ireland failed to satisfy his ambition, or allay his discontent; and, in 1452, he quitted that country without the permission or recall of the king, and proceeded to his castle in Wales, whence he set out for London with a retinue of 4000 men. Arriving at Westminster, he obtained an audience from Henry. His conduct in this interview is differently represented by different writers. In the preamble to his subsequent attainder, it is stated that he introduced armed men into the presence-chamber, and that he retired covered with confusion at the king's rebuke; but, in the Paston letters, we find the following passage, which sets his behaviour in a more favourable light:—

"It is said that my lord of York has been with the king, and departed in right good conceit with the king, but not in great conceit with the queen."<sup>1</sup> Margaret is supposed to have boldly charged the duke with treasonable practices, and to have urged his instant committal to the tower; but it is certain that the duke prevailed upon Henry to summon a parliament, and in the interim he retired to his castle of Fotheringay. He was scarcely gone, when Somerset arrived from France; but he had lost the confidence of the people by his loss of Normandy, and York's party hesitated not to impeach him. Early on the sitting of parliament, Young, one of the members for Bristol, after insisting on the necessity of naming the heir apparent, the king being yet without issue, boldly moved that the duke of York should be declared heir; but the suggestion was ill received, and Young was sent to the tower to expiate his boldness in confinement. After a prorogation of six weeks, the two houses met again, and York openly accused Somerset of misconduct and corruption in managing the affairs of France; but the queen's influence upheld the favourite, and York, after having narrowly escaped assassination, withdrew in sullen discontent to his castle at Ludlow. He now summoned the tenants of the house of Mortimer to his standard, and marched upon London, but finding the gates shut against him, turned towards Dartford, where he entrenched himself upon a heath, and fortified his camp with artillery. The king closely following his opponent's route, drew up his forces at Blackheath, and despatched a deputation to inquire the cause of his kinsman's hostile appearance. York made the usual protestation of loyalty, but declared that he had been driven to take up arms, in consequence of the repeated attempts which had been made to indict him of treason, and for the security of himself and the people at large against the wicked designs of these malevolent men who now shared the king's councils. He pointed to the duke of Somerset, by name, as the chief cause of his own and the nation's grievances, and demanded that he should be forthwith put upon his trial. It was deemed prudent by the king's friends to affect the appearance at least of concession to these demands. The king assured him that he still held him to be a true and faithful subject, and his own well-beloved cousin, and likewise assured him that a new council should be immediately appointed, of which he should form a member, and which should decide all matters now in dispute or debate. For his more thorough satisfaction and assurance, the duke of Somerset was reported to be in custody by the king's command. Satisfied with these concessions and promises, York instantly disbanded his army, and repaired alone and uncovered to Henry's tent, where, to his surprise and consternation, he was confronted by Somerset, who appeared at perfect liberty, and as high as ever in the king's favour. The two rivals fiercely retorted the charge of treason upon each other. Somerset accused York of designs upon the crown, and called upon the king to arrest him as a traitor. York replied with equal spirit; but on quitting the royal tent, found himself a prisoner. Somerset would have had his rival led forth to instant execution; but the mild genius of Henry prevailed, and he contented himself with exacting a solemn and public oath of fealty and allegiance from the duke.

<sup>1</sup> Fenn's Collection, vol. i.



The birth of Edward lowered the hopes of the Yorkists; but we have seen that the indisposition into which Henry soon afterwards sunk, rendered the recall of the duke of York into the cabinet a measure of necessity, and gave him, for the time, a complete ascendancy over his rival, who was committed to the tower. On this occasion York protested "that he did not assume the title or authority of protector, but was chosen by the parliament of themselves, and of their own free and mere disposition; and that he should be ready to resume his obedience to the king's commands, as soon as it was notified and declared unto him by the parliament, that Henry was restored to his health of body and mind."

By his marriage with the lady Cicely Neville, the duke gained the powerful support of her brothers, the earls of Salisbury and Warwick. These potent barons were easily induced to second their relative in his struggle for political ascendancy after Henry's recovery. "It was during this period," says Sir James Mackintosh, "that the whole people seem gradually to have arrayed themselves as Yorkists or Lancastrians. The rancour of parties was exasperated by confinement to narrow circles and petty districts. Feuds began to become hereditary, and the heirs of the lords slaughtered at St Albans, regarded the pursuit of revenge as essential to the honour of their families, and as a pious office due to the memory of their ancestors." The king, in the midst of these distractions, laboured assiduously, but in vain, to calm the angry passions of his nobles, and establish unanimity in the national councils. The pageant of a public reconciliation was enacted, but the stratagems of the queen again excited the distrust of the Yorkists, and the duke returned in disgust to his castle of Wigmore, the ancient seat of the Mortimers. Salisbury went to Middleham in Yorkshire, and Warwick to his government of Calais.<sup>2</sup> "But," says old Hale, "although the bodies of these noble persons were thus separated asunder by artifice, yet their hearts were united and coupled in one." They planned a junction, the result of which, as we have elsewhere detailed, once more threw the government into their hands. A parliament which assembled at Westminster, after the battle of Northampton, annulled all the recent proceedings which had been levelled against the Yorkists; and a few days afterwards, Richard, duke of York, having returned from Ireland, whither he had fled after his defeat at Ludlow, entered London, and riding to Westminster, presented himself in the upper house, in an attitude, and under circumstances which unequivocally indicated the views and wishes by which he was now animated. Stepping forward to the royal throne, he laid his hand upon the cloth of state, and stood for a short time in that attitude, as if waiting for an invitation to place himself on it. But every voice was silent, the nobles stood mute, and neither by word nor sign manifested the slightest token of approbation. The duke, thereupon, somewhat disconcerted, withdrew his hand, and this movement was instantly applauded by the circle around him. The archbishop of Canterbury taking courage from these indications of right feeling on the part of the spectators, boldly inquired, whether he would not wait upon the king, who was now in the

<sup>2</sup> "Then," says Comines, "considered as the most advantageous appointment at the disposal of any Christian prince, and that which placed the most considerable force at the disposal of the governor."

queen's apartment? To this question he indignantly replied, "I know no one in this realm who ought not rather to visit me." He then hastily withdrew, and took up his abode in that part of the palace which had been usually reserved for the accommodation of the king himself. Even the duke's party were not prepared for such a step as this; but Richard felt that he had now committed himself, and took his resolution accordingly. On the 16th of October, 1460, his counsel delivered to the bishop of Exeter, the new chancellor, a writing, containing a statement of his claims to the crowns of England and France, with the lordship of Ireland. In this writing, having first derived his descent from Henry III., by Lionel, duke of Clarence, third son to Edward III., he observed, that on the resignation of Richard II., Henry, earl of Derby, the son of John of Ghent, the younger brother of the said Lionel, against all manner of right, entered on the crowns of England and France, and the lordship of Ireland, which by law belonged to Roger Mortimer, earl of March, great-grandson to the said Sir Lionel: whence he concluded, that of right, law, and custom, the said crown and lordship now belonged to himself, as the lineal representative of Roger Mortimer, in preference to any one who could claim only as the descendant of Henry, earl of Derby.<sup>3</sup> We have already related in what spirit Henry received the first communication of York's pretensions; he concluded his address to the lords who waited upon him on this occasion, by commanding them "to search for to find in as much as in them was, all such things as might be objected and laid against the claim and title of the said duke." The lords devolved this duty upon the judges, who excused themselves from entering upon so delicate and dangerous a task, by observing that their office was not to be of counsel between party and party, but to apply the laws of the realm to such matters as came before them; that the present question was above law, and appertained not unto them, and that only the lords of the king's blood, and the high court of parliament, could decide it. The king's serjeants and attorney were then called upon for an opinion; and they also presented their excuses, alleging, that since the matter was so high, that it passed the learning of the judges, it must needs exceed their learning. But the apology was not received; the lords found that these officers were bound to give advice to the crown, and directed them as counsel for the king, to draw up an answer to Richard's claims. In the issue, the following objections—which we shall state in the words of Dr Lingard—were drawn up and sent to the duke:—"1. That both he and the lords had sworn fealty to Henry, and of course he, by his oath, was prevented from urging, they by theirs from admitting, his claim. 2. That many acts passed in divers parliaments of the king's progenitors, might be opposed to the pretensions of the house of Clarence, which acts have 'been of authority to defeat any manner of title.' 3. That several entails had been made of the crown to heirs male, whereas he claimed by descent from females. 4. That he did not bear the arms of Lionel the Third, but of Edmund the Fifth, son of Edward III. And, 5. That Henry IV. had declared that he entered on the throne as the true heir of Henry III.' To the three first objections, the duke's counsel replied:—'That as priority of descent was evidently in his

<sup>3</sup> Blackm. p. 375.

favour, it followed that the right to the crown was his, which right could not be defeated by oaths or acts of parliament, or entails. Indeed, the only entail made to the exclusion of females, was that of the seventh year of Henry IV., and would never have been thought of, had that prince claimed under the customary law of descents. That the reason why he had not hitherto taken the arms of Lionel, was the same as had prevented him from claiming the crown, the danger to which such a proceeding would have exposed him. And, lastly, that if Henry IV. pronounced himself the rightful heir of Henry III., he asserted what he knew to be untrue. As, however, the principal reliance of his adversaries was on the oaths which he had taken, and which it was contended were to be considered as a surrender of his right by his own act, he contended that no oath contrary to truth and justice is binding. That the virtue of an oath is to confirm truth, and not to impugn it; and that as the obligation of oaths is a subject for the determination of the spiritual tribunals, he was willing to answer in any such court all manner of men, who had any thing to propose against him." The lords resolved that the title of the duke of York could not be defeated; but proposed a compromise by which Henry acknowledged York as heir-apparent, notwithstanding the existence of the infant prince of Wales. On the adjustment of this important affair, the king and the duke went in state to St Paul's, to make their thanksgivings. But the spirit of Margaret was not so easily subdued as that of her husband. Instead of obeying the order which York procured, requiring her instant presence in London, that warlike dame hastened to join Northumberland and Clifford in the north. The duke of Somerset and the earl of Devon marched to her standard; and the coalition thus formed assembled a most formidable force at York. On receiving intelligence of these proceedings, York hastened, with a small body of men, to Sandal castle, near Wakefield, leaving his son and heir, the earl of March, to follow more at leisure with fresh supplies. Here his best advisers wished him to remain until the arrival of the expected reinforcement, but in opposition to such wise counsel he rashly determined to hazard a battle. It is said by some authors that the bitter taunts of the enemy provoked him to this rash step; but others with more probability suggest that Richard found himself driven to the necessity of risking an engagement by want of provisions; whatever it was that dictated the line of conduct which he now pursued, he seems to have forgotten that precaution which had hitherto been one of his characteristics, and to have rushed headlong and blindfold on certain destruction. On the last day of the year 1460, he drew out his troops on Wakefield common, and was instantly hemmed in on all sides by the greatly superior force of the enemy. A horrid scene of carnage ensued. The Yorkists fought with the fury of despair; but their desperate and unyielding courage availed them not. Within half an hour of the onset, nearly 3000 of York's followers lay dead on the field, while their leader himself and Salisbury, covered with wounds, had fallen into the hands of their assailants. Salisbury was decapitated the next day at Pontefract. Authors differ respecting the fate of York, Whethamstede affirms that he was taken alive, and his dying moments embittered by the brutal derision of his enemies, who, placing him upon an ant-hill for a throne, with a crown of grass round his temples,



hailed him,—‘ King without a kingdom ! prince without a people !’<sup>4</sup> Others affirm that he was killed in the fight, but add that his inanimate remains were treated with the most brutal indignity ; that Clifford bore his reeking head upon a pole into the presence of the queen, exclaiming,—“ Madam, your war is done ; here is the ransom of your king !” and that the unfeeling woman laughed aloud at the fearful spectacle, and ordered her brutal ally to attach the bloody head to one of the gates of the city of York.<sup>5</sup> In the pursuit, Clifford overtook Richard’s youngest son, the earl of Rutland, a boy in his twelfth year. His tutor, a venerable priest, was hastening with him from the field of conflict towards Wakefield, in hopes of finding shelter for his young charge in that town. They were stopped on the bridge, and Clifford, attracted by the rich garments of the boy, asked “ Who is he ?” Unable to speak through terror, the poor boy fell on his knees, and began to implore mercy ; and his faithful preceptor, thinking to save him, exclaimed,—“ He is the son of a prince, and may, peradventure, do you good hereafter !” “ The son of York !” shouted the bloody Clifford. “ Then as thy father slew mine, so will I slay thee, and all thy kin !” And plunging his dagger into the heart of the young prince, he bade the tutor bear the tidings of what he had seen to the boy’s mother.

## Owen Tudor.

DIED A. D. 1461.

QUEEN CATHERINE, widow of Henry V., soon after the death of her gallant and accomplished husband, bestowed her hand upon Sir Owen Tudor, a simple Welsh knight, whose graceful manners and great personal beauty had captivated the fair and royal matron. Sandford bears witness to the good taste at least which Catherine displayed in the selection of this husband ; for he tells us that Sir Owen was so “ absolute in all the lineaments of his body, that the only contemplation of it might make a queen forget all other circumstances.” Catherine indeed seems to have forgotten, or disregarded many circumstances which should have deterred her from a union so much beneath her in dignity, and so likely to prove the forerunner of family discord. She was a Frenchwoman, however, and cared little for the objections which were urged against her gratifying her own feelings in the disposal of her hand a second time. When Tudor’s kindred and country were objected to amongst other things, she expressed a desire to see some of his kinsmen. “ Whereupon,” says Wynne, “ he brought to her presence John Ap Meredith and Howell Ap Llewellyn Ap Howell, his neare cozens, men of goodly stature and personage, but wholly destitute of bringing up and nurture, for when the queen had spoken to them in divers languages, and they were not able to answer her, she said that they were ‘ the goodliest dumbe creatures that ever she saw.’” Three sons were the fruit of this union. The two elder, Edmund and Jasper, were created earls of Richmond and Pembroke by their half-brother, “ with pre-eminence,” says Fuller, “ to take place above all earls, for kings

<sup>4</sup> Whet. 439.

<sup>5</sup> Hall.

have absolute authority in dispensing honours." The younger entered into a religious community and died a monk. Upon the death of Catherine—which happened in 1437—Tudor was committed to prison for contempt of the royal prerogative, in marrying a tenant of the crown without previously obtaining the royal license. The hardy Welshman soon made escape from his confinement, but was afterwards retaken and committed to the castle of Wallingford. Miss Roberts has given a passage from a manuscript chronicle in the Harleian library, which, as she observes, goes far to disprove the ostentatious account so industriously circulated by Henry VII. and his partizans, respecting the royal descent of that monarch's paternal ancestor. It runs thus: "This same year one Oweyn, no man of birth neither of livelihood, broke out of Newgate against night, at searching time, through help of his priest, and went his way, hurting foule his keeper. The which Oweyn had privily wedded the Queen Katherine, and had three or four children by her, unweeting the common people till that she was dead and buried." Sir Owen perished at last upon the scaffold, having been taken prisoner by young Edward after the battle at Mortimer's cross, and instantly sacrificed to the revengeful feelings which then filled the conqueror's bosom.

## Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester.

BORN A. D. 1428.—DIED A. D. 1470.

JOHN TIPTOFT, earl of Worcester, one of the few literary ornaments of England in the 15th century, was born at Everton in Cambridge-shire, and educated at Baliol college, Oxford, where, as his contemporary John Rous of Warwick informs us, he greatly distinguished himself by his application to study and progress in the literature of the age. Upon the death of his father, Lord Tiptoft, in the twenty-first of Henry the Sixth's reign, he succeeded, while yet a minor, to the great estates of his family, and at the age of twenty-two was elevated to the earldom of Worcester. Three years later he was appointed lord-treasurer of England, and in the twenty-seventh year of his age he was commissioned with some other noblemen to guard the channel,—a task which he performed with equal honour to himself and advantage to his country. Withdrawing himself for a time from public life, he visited the Holy land, and returning by Italy, spent some time in Padua, then the great seat of learning for Europe, and graced by the presence of Ludovicus Carbo, Guarinus, and John Phrea, an Englishman, all famous for their learning. On this occasion, Phrea dedicated two of his works to the noble and accomplished young Englishman, of whom, amongst other complimentary things, he says: "Those superior beings whose office it is to be the guardians of our island of Britain, knowing you to be a wise and good man, an enemy to faction, and a friend of peace, warned you to abandon a country which they had abandoned, that you might receive no stain from associating with impious and factious men."<sup>1</sup> This is quite in the style of the age; but

<sup>1</sup> Leland, p. 477.

the fact appears to have been, that Tiptoft long balanced in his own mind the comparative advantages of adherence to the rising or to the sinking party, and unable at the moment to decide, wisely resolved on withdrawing himself from the scene altogether, until the great national struggle had been decided. He continued at Padua for the space of three years, during the heat of the civil wars in his native country. Laurentius Carbo represents him as so exceedingly fond of books, that during his residence at Padua, he plundered, so to speak, the libraries of Italy to enrich those of England. On his return home, he presented the literary spoils thus acquired to the university-library of Oxford. Before quitting Italy he visited Rome, and being introduced to Pope Pius II. addressed his holiness in a Latin oration, which drew tears of admiration from him. After it became known that Edward was firmly seated on the throne of England, Tiptoft returned to England, and was received into favour with that prince, who loaded him with honours, and at last appointed him lord-lieutenant of Ireland and constable of England. But on the brief restoration of Henry, this accomplished nobleman was seized, condemned, and beheaded at the tower in 1470, on a charge of mal-administration in Ireland. "O good blessed Lord!"—exclaims Caxton, in allusion to his unhappy fate—"what grete losse was it of that noble, virtuous, and well-disposed lord, the earl of Worcester! What worship had he at Rome in the presence of our holy father the pope, and in all other places unto his death! The axe then did at one blow cut off more learning than was in the heads of all the surviving nobility." The earl translated Cicero's treatises 'De Amicitia,' and 'De Senectute,' which were printed by Caxton in 1481. Some other pieces of his still remain in manuscript, and several have been lost.

## Wydeville, Earl Rivers.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1442.—DIED A. D. 1483.

THE accomplished Anthony Wydeville, Earl Rivers, was the son of Sir Richard Wydeville, by Jacqueline of Luxemburg, duchess-dowager of Bedford, who, like Queen Catherine, had not hesitated to bestow her hand on the man she loved, though, in doing so, she outraged some just notions of propriety and dignity. The subject of our present sketch was born about the year 1442, and, while yet a youth, took an active part with his father in supporting the sinking interests of the Lancastrian family. When Denham, by a bold and unexpected descent on Sandwich, had surprised Lord Rivers, who was engaged in fitting out an armament in that port, the young Rivers shared his father's captivity, and was carried with him to Calais, where he nobly endured the rude reproaches of Warwick and his coadjutors Salisbury and March. The marriage of Edward with Elizabeth, the sister of Anthony Wydeville, changed the politics as well as fortunes of the house of Rivers. Soon after his sister's marriage, Anthony obtained the hand of the orphan daughter of Lord Scales, and in addition to his wife's estates, succeeded also to her father's title. In 1467, in a solemn and magnificent tournament held at Smithfield, probably in honour of



the marriage of the king's sister with Charles, duke of Burgundy, Anthony twice overcame the Count de la Roche, and won for himself the highest reputation for skill and chivalric courtesy. Equally distinguished as a warrior and a statesman,—‘*vir hand facile discernas manuve aut consilio promptior*,’ in the words of Sir Thomas More,—Lord Rivers was intrusted with several important embassies at the courts of Scotland, Burgundy, and Bretagne; and being smitten with the desire to visit foreign countries, he employed his leisure in travelling through Spain and Italy. He made a pilgrimage to the altar of St James of Compostella, and purchased a large indulgence from the holy see for the chapel of our Lady of Pisa, near St Stephen's, Westminster.

At the period of Edward the Fourth's decease, the youthful heir of his crown resided at Ludlow castle under the care of the earl of Rivers, and the queen proposed that her son should be instantly escorted to the metropolis by his uncle, at the head of a large body of troops; but the jealousy of Lord Hastings retarded this measure, and in the meantime Gloucester appeared on the stage, and entered on that deep game which involved the Wydevilles as its earliest victims. Rivers has been censured for allowing the young king to pursue his route to Stoney-Stratford while he himself lingered behind in Northampton until Gloucester arrived there. But it does not appear that the earl either meditated deserting the young prince, or suspected the treacherous designs of the duke: for the whole party, after having exchanged mutual assurances of friendship, sat down together to a festal banquet, after which Rivers retired to his lodgings without making an attempt to escape, and next morning he accompanied the duke to Stoney-Stratford, where they joined Edward and his train. Gloucester now threw off the mask, and suddenly accused Rivers and Gray of having attempted to misrepresent him to the king, his nephew; at the same time he caused the most confidential of the young king's servants to be laid under arrest, and ordered the rest of his retinue to disperse. Soon afterwards, the gallant Rivers was beheaded without form of trial. He perished in the forty-first year of his age. Walpole has justly said of him, that he was “as gallant as his luxurious brother-in-law, without his weaknesses; as brave as the heroes of either rose, without their savageness; studious in the intervals of business, and devout after the manner of those whimsical times, when men challenged others whom they never saw, and went barefoot to visit shrines in countries of which they had scarce a map.”

The literature of England is under deep obligations to this accomplished nobleman, who greatly enriched it by original and felicitous poetry and translations from the classics and from French authors. Hume says that he first introduced the noble art of printing into England; but this is evidently a mistake. He greatly patronised Caxton, however, and his ‘*Dictes and Sayinges of the Philosophers*’ is supposed to have been the second work produced in England by that printer. This translation was executed by the earl during his seclusion at Ludlow, while superintending the education of the prince, his nephew. The preface is written in a fine spirit, and cannot fail to interest the general reader as well as the student of our early literature. “Whereas,” says he, “it is so that, every humayn creature by the

sufferaunce of our Lord God is born and ordeyned to be subject and thrallled unto the storms of fortune, and so in divers and many sundry wayes man is perplexed with worldly adversities, of the which, I, Antoine Wydeville, Erle Ryuers, Lord Scales, &c. have largely and in many different manner, have had my parte, and of him releived by the infinite grace and goodness of our said Lord, through the means of the mediation of mercy, which grace evidently to know and understood hath compelled me to set aparte all ingratitude, and droofe (drove) me by reson and conscience as far as my wretchedness would suffice to give therefore singular lovynges and thankes, and exhorted me to dispose my recovered lyf to his service, in following his lawes and commandements, and in satisfaction and recompense of mine iniquities and fawtes before donn, to seke and execute the workes that might be most acceptable to hym ; and as far as my frailness would suffer me, I rested in the wyll and purpose during the season I understood the Jubylee and pardon to be at the holy appostle Seynt James in Spain, which was the year of grace, a thousand cccclxxiii. Thenne I determined me to take that voyage, and shipped from Southampton in the month of July in the said year, and so sayled from thence for a recreacyon, and passing of time I had delight, and used to read some good historye, and among other there was that person in my company, a worshipful gentleman called Louis de Breteylles, which greatly delighted him in all virtuous and honest things, that sayd to me he had there a book that he trusted I should like right well, and broughte it to me, which book I had never seen before, and is called 'The Sayynges and Dictes of Philosophers,' and as I understand it was translated out of Latin into French, by a worshipfull man called Messire Jehan de Teonville, Provost of Parys. When I had heeded and looked upon it as I had tyme and space, I gave thereto a very affection ; and in special because of the holsom and swete saynges of the paynims which is a glorious fayre myrrour to all good Christian people to behold and understand ; ever that a greate comforte to every well-disposed soul ; it speaketh also universally to the example, weal, and doctrine of all kynges, princes, and to people of every estate. It lauds virtue and science, it blames vice and ignorance ; and albeit as I could not at that season, no in all that pilgrimage time, have leisure to oversee it well at my pleasure, whilst for the dispositions that belongeth to a taker of jubylee and pardons, and also for the great acquaintance that I founde there of worshipful folkes, with whom it was fittinge that I should keepe good and honest company, yet nevertheless it rested still in the desirous favour of my minde, intending utterly to take these with greater acquaintance at some other convenient time, and so remaining in that oppynyon after such season as it listed the king's grace to commaunde me to give my attendance upon my lord the prince, and that I was in his service ; when I had leisure I looked upon the said book, and at the last conclude in myself to translate it into the English tongue." The Earl Rivers also clothed the 'Morale Proverbes of Christine of Pisa' in an English dress. "In this translation," says Walpole, "the earl discovered new talents, turning the work into a poem of two hundred and three lines, the greatest part of which he contrived to make conclude with the letter E, an instance at once of his lordship's application, and of the bad taste of an age which

had witticisms and whims to struggle with as well as ignorance." Caxton, in enumerating the works of this nobleman, mentions a third translation from the French of 'The booke named Cordyale, or Memorare Novissime,' and 'over that divers balades against the seven dedely synnes.' But the most interesting of all the earl's productions are the stanzas which he composed in the prospect of his execution, when the harsh and unjust mandate of his oppressors was about to consign him to a dishonoured and premature grave. This ballad was printed in the first edition of this ill-fated nobleman's reliques from an imperfect copy preserved by Rous, the defects of which were afterwards supplied by the Fairfax manuscripts in the Sloanian collection. We shall here insert it entire for the gratification of the reader, although, as an illustration of English literature, it belongs properly to the literary section of the period now under consideration.

" Sumwhat mysynge  
And more more nyng  
In remembrynge  
The unстыdfastnesse.  
This world beyng  
Of such whelynge  
The contrayinge  
What may I guess ?

" I fear dowtles  
Remediles  
Is now, to sese  
My woeful chaunce  
For unkyndnes  
Withoutenless<sup>1</sup>  
And no redress  
Me doth avaunce.<sup>2</sup>

" Wyth displeasaunce  
To my grievauce  
And no surance  
Of remedy.  
So in this traunce  
Now in substaunce  
Such is my daunce  
Willing to die.

" Methynkes truly  
Boundyn am I  
(And that gretly)  
To be constant.  
Seyng pleynty  
That fortune doth wry<sup>3</sup>  
All contrary  
From mine entent.

" My lyff was lent  
Me on entent,  
Hytt is nigh spent  
Welcome fortune.  
But I ne'er went<sup>4</sup>  
Thus to be shent<sup>5</sup>  
But so hytt ment  
Such is her wonne.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To speak plainly.  
<sup>4</sup> I never thought.

<sup>2</sup> Urges on my fate.  
<sup>5</sup> Thus to be cut off.

<sup>3</sup> Doth turn aside.  
<sup>6</sup> His custom.



## Lord Hastings.

DIED A. D. 1483.

ONE of the most distinguished victims of the protector's ambition was the lord Hastings. The early and honoured friend of Edward IV. he had zealously asserted the rights of the young princes while Gloucester was plotting their destruction. This conduct marked him out for the victim of the man whom no considerations of blood, or justice, or humanity, ever turned aside from the pursuits of ambition and self-aggrandisement. As one of Edward's ministers, Hastings had exhibited a more than ordinary amount of talent, united to as great an amount of conscientiousness, perhaps, as the circle of the English court at the time exhibited. It is true that he accepted a pension of two thousand crowns from Louis XI. of France, the meaning of which could not be misunderstood; and that at the concluding of the treaty of Pecquigny, he received from the same monarch a gift of twelve dozen of gilt silver bowls, and twelve dozen not gilt, each of which weighed seventeen nobles; but then this was nothing more than a harmless compliance with the fashion of the times, and the English monarch was too needy and prodigal himself to forbid his favourites any means of making up to themselves what his own treasury could not yield them. Yet, in these corrupt transactions, Hastings showed "some glimmering of a sense of perverted and paradoxical humour." When Cleret, the medium of communication between the subtle monarch and the English ministers, hinted that some formal acknowledgment of the donation might be of use to him in his accountings with the king his master, Hastings gravely answered, "Sir, this gift cometh from the liberal pleasure of the king your master, and not from my request; if it be his determinate will that I should have it, put it into my sleeve; if not, return it; for neither he nor you shall have it to brag that the lord-chamberlain of England has been his pensioner."<sup>1</sup> Doubtless the lord-chamberlain felt himself to be a highly honourable and virtuous man, in thus refusing to give a receipt for a bribe which his sleeve at the same time gaped wide to receive; his less scrupulous companion accepted the money, and gave receipts for their several gratuities also, which still appear in the French archives; but posterity will probably admire the prudence more than the virtue of the lord-chamberlain in his dealings with paymaster Cleret. Handsome in person, and highly accomplished, Hastings soon made himself a prime auxiliary in Edward's profligate amusements; and in doing so, incurred the resentment of the queen, who justly suspected him of encouraging her husband's unbecoming gallantries.

In the expedition to France, Hastings bore a distinguished part, and was attended by a select body of gentlemen volunteers, who specially attached themselves to his service, and vowed "to aid and succour him so far forth as law, equity, and conscience, required." Supported by the general feeling in his favour, and at first an object neither of dread

<sup>1</sup> Holinshed, iii. 342.

nor dislike to the ambitious protector, Hastings might have stood his ground in the convulsions which followed Edward's death; but his jealousy and desertion of Rivers proved fatal to himself. He had been engaged in a personal quarrel with Rivers, which drew upon him the severe resentment of the king himself, and nearly endangered his life and estate. From this period he had nursed sentiments of revenge towards his accomplished rival, which the force of circumstances alone had prevented him from gratifying. Edward had seen and marked their animosity, and while on death-bed, had called them into his chamber, exhorted them to mutual forgiveness, and commanded them to embrace in his presence. They obeyed the royal mandate, and exchanged the external tokens of friendship, but the lapse of a few days sufficed to prove how hollow such reluctant professions of reconciliation were. When Elizabeth proposed in council that Rivers and Gray should conduct her young son from Ludlow to the metropolis, Hastings and his friends took alarm. They at once perceived that the command of an army would give the queen and the Wydevilles an immense advantage over their opponents. Where, they asked, was the necessity of an army? Who were the enemies against whom it was to be directed? Did the Wydevilles mean to break the reconciliation they had so recently sworn to observe? An angry altercation ensued: the queen eagerly insisting on the proposed arrangement, and Hastings as determinedly resisting it. At last he declared that he would quit the court and retire to his command at Calais, if the queen persisted in her intentions. Elizabeth fearing to provoke a formidable party at so critical a juncture, yielded, and those measures were adopted which, in the issue, placed the queen's party at the mercy of Gloucester.

The intelligence of the arrest of Rivers, was received by the lord-chamberlain with a burst of delusive joy. He was directed to communicate intelligence of Gloucester's proceedings at Northampton to the council, and accordingly sent information to the chancellor, Rotherham, archbishop of York. That prelate instantly waited upon the queen, now preparing to take refuge from the impending storm in the sanctuary of Westminster, and informed her that her son was in his uncle's hands; but exhorted her to take courage, for "that he was putte in good hope and out of feare by the message sente him from the lord-chamberlain." "Ah, woo worthe him!" exclaimed the queen, "for hee is one of them that laboureth to destroye me and my bloode."<sup>2</sup> For a time Hastings laboured to support Richard, with a blindness to his real designs amounting to fatuity. Lord Stanley told him that "he misliked these several councils" which Richard held with a private junto of his own, to which neither Hastings, Stanley, nor the archbishops of Canterbury and York, were ever invited; but the chamberlain laughed at his fears, and replied, "My lord, on my life never doute you, for while one man is there which is never thence, never can there be thinges ones minded that should sounde amisse towards me, but it should be in our eares ere it were well out of their mouths." In these words, Hastings alluded to Catesby, a lawyer who had risen to eminence under his patronage, and who was one of the duke's council at Crosby house, from whom he expected to learn all the secrets of that

<sup>2</sup> Sir Thomas More.

divan. But Catesby was playing a double and a false game, and was one of the first to betray his ancient patron to the duke. He told him of the warm and unshaken attachment which Hastings bore to the young princes, and from that moment the latter was a doomed man. Stanley again warned him of his danger under the similitude of a dream, afraid, perhaps, to trust even Hastings with a more open disclosure of the sentiments which he entertained regarding Richard. He sent a special messenger to him in the dead of the night, beseeching him to take horse instantly and flee from the city, for that he had just had a fearful vision, wherein a boar had attacked himself and his friend, and wounded both\* of them in the head with his tusks. Hastings could be at no loss to interpret Stanley's vision, for Richard's cognizance was a boar, yet with blind reliance on the duke's protestations, he laughed to scorn the timidity and visionary terrors of his friend, and desired him to give no credit to such vain phantasies, for he was as sure of the man to whom the vision pointed as of his own hand.<sup>3</sup> In the same morning on which Hastings had rejected the counsel thus conveyed to him, a friend of the protector waited upon him, desiring his presence in the council chamber. On their way thither, Hastings stopped to converse with an ecclesiastic of his acquaintance whom he happened to meet in the street, until his companion chided his delay, saying, "What, my lord, I pray you come on, whereto talke you so long with that priest, you have no need of a priest *yet*." Still the infatuated noble remained unconscious of danger, and hastened onwards to the place of meeting. Gloucester entered soon after the arrival of Hastings; his appearance struck the council with surprise and dismay, and they looked in silence at each other and him. His brow was contracted into a dark frown, and for a time he sat biting his lips in suppressed rage, until he suddenly broke silence by inquiring what punishment those persons merited who were now imagining and compassing his death. It was Hastings who first answered the question by exclaiming, that they should be dealt with as traitors. Gloucester then darkly hinted at his intended victims: "That sorceress, my brother's wife!" he exclaimed, plucking up his left sleeve, and exposing the lean and withered arm which it covered, and which was well known to have been a congenital deformity of his person. "Ye shall all see," he continued, "how that sorceress and that witch of her council, Shore's wife, have by their practices wasted my body." The accusation, absurd as it was, boded no good to Hastings, who, after Edward's death, had formed a connexion with his favourite mistress; yet he plucked up courage to reply: "Certainly, my lord, if they have so heinously done, they be worthy of heinous punishment." "What!" rejoined the protector, "dost thou answer me with ifs and ands? I tell thee they have done it, and that I will make good on thy body, traitor!" At these words he struck the table violently with his fist, whereupon, as if at a preconcerted signal, a voice at the door exclaimed 'Treason!' and a body of armed men instantly burst into the hall. Hastings and Stanley, with the prelates of York and Ely, were instantly arrested. The three latter were conveyed away to separate chambers, but Gloucester swore by St Paul, that he would not dine till Hastings' head was off, and commanded his vic-

<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas More.



tim to hasten to confession. It was in vain that the unfortunate nobleman inquired what offence he had committed worthy of death, or even imprisonment; the mandate for instant execution was imperious, and none dared to interpose a plea for mercy. The nearest priest received the unhappy man's hurried confession, and a log of timber which lay in the yard at the door of the chapel, served for a block, on which the fatal blow was given. The same afternoon, a proclamation appeared, in which it was announced, that Hastings and his friends having conspired "the same day to have slain the lord-protector, and the duke of Buckingham, sitting in the council," had been, "by the help of God," resisted and overcome in the foul attempt. Then followed various animadversions on the late chamberlain's character and conduct as an evil counsellor to Edward IV., not omitting severe comments upon his known connexion with Jane Shore.<sup>4</sup>

## Richard III.

DIED A. D. 1485.

RICHARD the Third has been, until of late years, the *ame damnée* of historians. They have heaped on his memory the darkest accusations,—imputed to him nearly every atrocious deed that was perpetrated during his public life,—and, to crown this fearful accumulation, they have described his form as foully distorted, and his features as expressive of the deep malignity of his soul. To these representations, the appalling impersonation of villanous hypocrisy to which Shakspeare attached the name of Richard has given a force and verisimilitude against which it appears almost hopeless to hold up a tamer, though truer limning. He has come down to the present day, as the assassin of Henry the Sixth and of his unfortunate son,—as the murderer of Clarence, and as the subtle specious schemer, whose object it was, even during the life of his crowned brother, to prepare a way to the throne, by the deliberate extinction of every life which stood between him and the 'royal chair.' For all and each of these charges, the evidence is of an exceedingly questionable character. That Henry was actually murdered, though probable, is not absolutely certain; but on the admission that his death was violent, there still does not appear any ground of substantial testimony for charging the act itself on the duke of Gloucester. That he assisted in the cold-blooded butchery of the youthful Edward of Lancaster is indeed affirmed by writers of repute; yet there is counter-evidence sufficient to throw doubt on the highly-coloured statement which makes princes and nobles the eager murderers of a defenceless boy. Of the death of Clarence, there are the strongest reasons for acquitting him; and it is far more probable that the king was urged on to fratricide by the apprehensions of the queen and her family. It is certainly possible that the bold measures by which he secured first the protectorate, and afterwards the crown, were the result of long premeditation and close intrigue; yet is there absolutely nothing in the way of proof that should lead to such a conclu-

<sup>4</sup> Sir Thomas More

sion; and the balance of probabilities, as well as the peculiar features of the enterprise, would rather induce the belief, that whatever his ambition might have previously hoped, the overt-acts in which it first displayed itself were suggested and governed by the circumstances in which he found himself placed.

As crowned king, his administration was just and able. He affected magnificence after the fashion of his deceased brother, though without his fantastical exaggerations. His person and manners—for any thing that appears to the contrary—were pleasing and graceful, though his historians have been pleased to represent a shape, perhaps not altogether symmetrical, as a mere system of distortions, ‘rudely stamp’d,—cheated of feature,—deformed, unfinished,—scarce half made up.’ Early in his brief reign, he undertook a royal progress through the kingdom, for the purpose of redressing grievances, correcting abuses, and administering justice; but at York, where he had re-enacted the pompous pageant of his coronation, he was startled by menacing intelligence. The duke of Buckingham, Richard’s devoted partizan and bosom-counsellor through the entire business of the usurpation, had been made too powerful not to whisper to himself a hope that, in the scramble for dignities, it might fall to his chance to clutch a sceptre, and when that dream was dissipated by farther reflection, he plotted with the friends of the queen-dowager, to replace young Edward on the throne. But the murderous foresight of Richard had already marred that scheme; the two princes had perished in the tower, at the command of their uncle. Defeated in this plan, Buckingham put forward the earl of Richmond, afterward Henry VII., as the rightful claimant of the kingdom. Richard, brave and active, lost not an hour in hesitation; he immediately assembled troops, and issued a proclamation which, for its cool hypocrisy, may challenge competition. It was something new, even in those strange days, for a king to arraign the private morals of his enemies; yet did he in that marvellous document, in addition to the usual charges of faction and treason, think it worth his while, and worthy of his rank, to abuse his antagonists as ‘adulterers and bawds.’<sup>1</sup> His armament and his moral indignation were, however, alike uncalled for, since the event proved that Buckingham had miscalculated his means and opportunity. The elements traversed his intended enterprise; he started from Brecknock, but the Severn was in flood, and the bridges were broken down; his movements were watched, and his half-hearted followers disbanded. The simultaneous risings which were to have aided his efforts by calling off the attention of the royalists, were easily dispersed, and this ill-combined insurrection terminated in the public execution of Buckingham, and the flight of the other Lancastrian leaders to foreign shores. The king dealt sharply with his foes; such as came within his grasp he sent to the gibbet and the block; and a subservient parliament aided him in visiting the rest with confiscation and attainder. Richard took farther measures for the legitimization of his title, by procuring, under parliamentary forms, the annulment of his brother’s marriage with Elizabeth Grey, thus bastardising the issue of that union. Of this measure, it is not easy to discern the expediency; the young princes were dead, and this pertinacious recur-

<sup>1</sup> Rymer.

rence to the question of legitimacy, could but revive recollections of little advantage to the individual who had commanded their murder. In other quarters, his policy was wiser: he completed a pacific negotiation with Scotland, and intrigued at the court of Bretagne, where the earl of Richmond and his adherents had found an asylum, but whence they were compelled to withdraw by the subtle and successful machinations of Richard. But a domestic calamity, the death of his only son in April, 1484, gave him a farther opportunity of exercising his characteristic craft. He persuaded his brother's widow, whose children he had put to death, whose character he had aspersed, and whose rank he had taken away, to quit the sanctuary of Westminster, where she had so long found refuge, and with her daughters to appear at court. He even procured her consent to his marriage with her eldest daughter, and both these heartless and ambitious women were elated at the prospect of the unnatural alliance, though aware, it is to be feared, that it could not be effected without foul play to Richard's still living queen. But when the death, probably by poison, of his consort, had removed the main difficulty, the well-grounded remonstrances of his favourite advisers defeated the plan. The indignation of the nation at the marriage of uncle and niece,—the confirmation of the general suspicion that it had been preceded and prepared by a convenient murder,—with other important motives powerfully urged, prevailed on the king to abandon his design.

In the mean time, a threatening storm was gathering on the shores of France. Henry, earl of Richmond, had been acknowledged by all the exiles, and by the malcontents of England, as the heir of Lancaster; he had pledged himself to merge the conflicting claims of the two houses, by a marriage, in the event of success, with Elizabeth, the heiress of York, and thus blend the opposite rights; he was assembling troops under the auspices of the king of France, for the invasion of England. In July, 1485, he made good his landing at Milford-Haven; and when he reached Shrewsbury his army amounted to four thousand men, the greater part of whom were Normans. Richard moved on Leicester with a powerful array, but disaffection pervaded its ranks: his crimes had destroyed his chance of reigning, and when the armies faced each other on Bosworth field, he found, that while some of his soldiers were openly deserting him, the remainder were either wavering or obviously waiting the event. In this desperate situation, the king made one last personal effort for victory. Perceiving Richmond, surrounded by his officers, at no great distance, Richard charged at full speed upon Henry's guard, cut down his standard-bearer, unhorsed another knight, and was aiming a blow at his rival, who neither avoided nor advanced, when numbers rushed between, and the gallant usurper fell fiercely fighting in the *mêlée*.

It is not necessary to offer farther illustration of the character of Richard than has been already given. That he has been charged with crimes which he never committed, is more than probable, but when every deduction has been made, enough will remain to give him high rank among the worst men who have worn a crown. No means, however atrocious, of obtaining his ends, came amiss to him; poison or steel, blood or suffocation, craft or violence, were alike in the perpetrations of this sanguinary hypocrite. In bravery, subtilty, cold-blooded



cruelty and consummate hypocrisy, there is a striking resemblance between his character and that of Aurungzeeb.

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## II.—ECCLESIASTICAL SERIES.

### Walter de Merton.

DIED A. D. 1277.

Of the personal history of this excellent bishop little is known. He was the son of William de Merton, archdeacon of Berks, and was born at Merton in Surrey, where also he obtained the rudiments of education in a monastical establishment. In the year 1239, he appears to have been in possession of the family estate, and also of one inherited from his mother, both his parents being now dead. In 1259, he held a prebend in Exeter cathedral, and Browne Willis says, that he was vicar of Potton, in Bedfordshire, at the time of his promotion to the see of Rochester. Other accounts say, that he was first canon of Salisbury, and afterwards rector of Stratton. The custom of the times permitted of his devoting his attention to the profession of the law, although in holy orders, and he appears to have exercised at one and the same time the functions of a divine, a lawyer, and a financier, and that with high credit and reputation. In the court of chancery he became king's clerk, and subsequently protonotary; and, in 1258, he was appointed to the highest judicial office in the kingdom. The barons, indeed, deprived him of the chancellorship in the same year in which it had been conferred on him, but he was restored to office in 1261, and held the seals again in 1274, before his consecration to the bishopric of Rochester. Throughout rather a long life, this prelate distinguished himself by the benevolence of his disposition, and the liberal patronage which he was ever ready to extend to men of letters. In 1261, he founded the hospital of St John for poor and infirm clergy; and soon afterwards he laid the foundation of the college which still bears his name in the university of Oxford. With regard to the latter institution, Wood and others state that the bishop confined his first attention to the erection and endowment of a school at Malden, which was to form a sort of nursery for the university; and that although he made provision for the support of the Malden scholars while attending Oxford, the establishment itself was not removed from Malden to Oxford until the year 1274, when its third and last charter was obtained. The successive charters of this establishment are still preserved in the library, and were consulted as precedents in the founding of Peterhouse, the earliest college of the sister-university. His preference of Oxford is explained by the fact of his having studied some time among the canons regular of Oseney, in the neighbourhood of Oxford. Merton died on the 27th of October, 1277. His death was occasioned by a fall from his horse in fording a river in his diocese. He was interred

in Rochester cathedral, where a beautiful alabaster monument was erected to his memory by the society of Merton college.

## Archbishop Peckham.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1240.—DIED A. D. 1292.

JOHN PECKHAM, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Edward I., was born in the county of Sussex about the year 1240. He received the rudiments of instruction in a monastery at Lewes, whence he was sent to Oxford, where his name occurs in the registers of Merton college. He was created doctor in divinity at this university, and read public lectures: Pitt says he was professor of divinity. He appears to have visited Paris twice, and to have read lectures in that city also with great applause. From Paris he journeyed to Lyons, where he was presented with a canonry in the cathedral of Lyons, which was held by the archbishops of Canterbury for two centuries after. He then went to Rome, where the pope appointed him palatine lecturer or reader.<sup>1</sup> In 1278, his holiness consecrated him archbishop of Canterbury, on his agreeing to pay 4,000 marks for the appointment. Peckham had nearly forgot his pledge in this instance, but the holy father failed not to remind him of it, and to accompany his message with a gentle hint at excommunication in the event of further delay or non-compliance.<sup>2</sup> Edward, who had not yet determined on breaking his peace with the court of Rome, received the new primate in peace, and, though he thwarted him at first in some things, seems to have at last reposed considerable confidence in him, for in 1282 he was sent in person to effect a reconciliation between the king and the prince of Wales, then at Snowdon, and threatening to concur with the oppressed Welsh in the defence of public liberty. Peckham was a man of considerable vigour and independence of mind; shortly after his appointment to the primacy, he held a provincial synod at Reading, in which several canons for the better regulation of the church, and especially for securing effect to its sentences of excommunication, were promulgated. In 1281, he held another council at Lambeth, in which several canons were enacted touching the administration of the eucharist. In the same year, he addressed a spirited remonstrance to the king in support of the rights and privileges of the clergy. In this document he complains that the church was grievously injured and oppressed by the civil power, contrary to the decrees of the popes, the canons of councils, and the authority of the orthodox fathers; "in which," says he, "there is the supreme authority, the supreme truth, and the supreme sanctity, and no end may be put to disputation unless we submit ourselves to these three great laws." He then goes on to protest, that no oaths which may ever be extorted from him shall constrain him to do any thing against the privileges and rights of the church, and offers to absolve the king from any oath he may have taken that can anywise incite him against the church. Edward, though he paid no heed to the primate's expostulations, allowed him to remain unmolested. In 1286,

<sup>1</sup> Leland.

<sup>2</sup> Dupin, xi. 72.

the archbishop signalized his orthodoxy and skill in scholastic divinity, by publicly censuring several propositions maintained by one Richard Knapwell, a Dominican friar. One of these was, "that, in articles of faith, a man is not bound to rest on the authority of the pope, or of any priest or doctor; but that the holy scriptures and right reason are the only foundations of our assent."<sup>3</sup> It is singular that this noble proposition, on which the goodly superstructure of the reformation was afterwards reared, should have found a place among Knapwell's heretical propositions, which were all, with this one and splendid exception, too trifling and absurd to merit a moment's notice from any one but the lover of scholastic jargon.

Peckham died at Mortlake, in 1292, and was buried in Canterbury cathedral, near the remains of Thomas Becket. He was succeeded in the primacy by Robert Winchelsey, who is said to have been a prelate of great piety, and some learning, but who sat very uneasy in the archiepiscopal chair under the repeated attacks which Edward and his parliament made upon the wealth and immunities of the church.

Godwin represents Archbishop Peckham as a man of great state, who loved to surround himself with the external marks of authority and grandeur, but was easily accessible, and of a liberal and courteous disposition. He founded a college at Wingham in Kent; and Anthony Wood makes frequent mention of the services which he rendered to the university of Oxford. In some of his regulations for that place of learning, he shows his good sense in the censures which he has passed upon certain logical and grammatical *nugæ* which were then in high fashion among the schools; and he appears to have always been a zealous promoter of strict discipline and good morals. Tanner enumerates a great many of his theological tracts, which still remain, however, in manuscript in our public libraries, with the exception of a few of his letters which were published by Wharton, and his statutes and institutions which are inserted in the 'Concilia' of Wilkins.

## Bishop Aungervyle.

BORN A. D. 1281.—DIED A. D. 1345.

RICHARD AUNGERVYLE, commonly known by the name of RICHARD DE BURY, bishop of Durham, was born in 1281, at St Edmund's Bury, in Suffolk. He was educated at the university of Oxford, after which he entered into the order of Benedictine monks at Durham, and became tutor to Edward, prince of Wales, afterwards King Edward III. Upon the accession of his royal pupil to the throne, he was loaded with honours and emoluments, being first appointed cofferer, then treasurer of the wardrobe, archdean of Northampton, prebendary of Lincoln, Sarum, and Lichfield, keeper of the privy seal, dean of Wells,—and last of all, promoted to the bishopric of Durham in 1333. He likewise enjoyed the offices of lord-high-chancellor and treasurer of England, and discharged two important embassies at the court of France. Learned himself, and a patron of the learned, he maintained a corre-

<sup>3</sup> Wykes, p. 114.—Spelm. conc. ii. 347.



spondence with some of the greatest geniuses of the age, particularly with the celebrated Petrarch. He was of a most humane and benevolent temper, and performed many signal acts of charity. Every week he caused eight quarters of wheat to be made into bread, and given to the poor; and whenever he travelled between Durham and Newcastle, he distributed £8 in alms; between Durham and Stockton, £5; between Durham and Auckland, 5 marks; and between Durham and Middleham, £5. He is said to have possessed more books than all the other bishops of England together, and founded a public library at Oxford for the use of the students, which he furnished with the best collection of books, especially Greek and Hebrew grammars, then in England, and appointed five keepers to whom he granted yearly salaries. At the dissolution of religious houses in the reign of Henry VIII., Durham college, where he had fixed the library, being dissolved among the rest, some of the books were removed to the public library, some to Baliol college, and some came into the hands of Dr George Owen, a physician of Godstow, who bought that college of King Edward VI. Bishop Aungervyle died at his manor of Auckland on the 24th of April, 1345, and was buried in the south part of the cross aisle of the cathedral church of Durham, to which he had been a benefactor. He wrote: 1st, '*Philobiblos*,' a singular book, containing directions for the management of his library at Oxford, and a great deal in praise of learning, but in very bad Latin; 2d, '*Epistolæ Familiarium*,' some of which are addressed to Petrarch; 3d, '*Orationes ad Principes*,' mentioned by Bale and Pitts.

## William of Wykeham.

BORN A. D. 1324.—DIED A. D. 1404.

WILLIAM of Wykeham, the illustrious founder of New college, Oxford, was born at Wykeham in Hampshire, in 1324. It is supposed that he took his surname from the place of his birth, as his father's name appears to have been Lange; or, according to others, Perrot. His parents were poor, and unable to afford their son a liberal education; but, in the person of Nicholas Uvedale, lord of the manor of Wykeham, the future bishop of Winchester, and chancellor of England, found a discerning and liberal patron; he sent him to Winchester school, and afterwards received him into his household in the capacity of secretary.

At the age of twenty-two or twenty-three, he appears to have obtained, probably through the influence of his generous patron, some kind of employment at court, but of what precise nature cannot now be ascertained. The first office which we know him to have held, was that of clerk of the king's works in his manors of Henle and Teshampstead. He held this office by patent in 1356, and soon afterwards was made surveyor of the works at Windsor, with an allowance of one shilling a-day. It was by the persuasion of Wykeham, that Edward was induced to pull down a great part of the royal castle at

<sup>1</sup> Spires, 1183, 40.

Windsor, and reconstruct it in that style of magnificence to which it still owes its imposing grandeur. His other great work was Queensborough castle, in which he displayed great architectural skill in contending with the disadvantages of situation and other natural obstacles. Such a man was regarded as a valuable acquisition by a sovereign of Edward's magnificent taste; and accordingly we find preferments rapidly showered upon him from the royal hand. These were, indeed, of an ecclesiastical kind; but there is reason to believe that Wykeham had designed from the first to take church orders, and it is a strong confirmation of this presumption, that in all his early patents he is styled *clericus*. He was ordained priest by Edyngdon, bishop of Winchester; and, in 1357, was presented to the rectory of Pulham in Norfolk; but as the court of Rome started some difficulties against him, he was not put in possession of the rectorship until 1361. From this latter period, preferments flowed upon him, so that the annual value of his various livings, for some years before he became bishop of Winchester, amounted to £842. His liberality, however, kept pace with his increasing means. It is affirmed of him by Dr Lowth, that "he only received the revenues of the church with one hand, to expend them in her service with the other." Nor were his civil promotions less rapid and honourable. In 1360, he attended the king to Calais, and assisted at the ratification of the treaty of Bretagne. In 1362, he was made warden and justiciary of the king's forests on this side of Trent. On the 11th of May, 1364, he was appointed keeper of the privy seal, and two years afterwards, secretary to the king, and chief of the privy council. Such, indeed, was his influence, that Froissart, a contemporary historian, who was perfectly acquainted with the affairs of the English court, and at this time resident there, affirms that "every thing was done by this priest, and nothing was done without him."

On the 8th of October, 1366, Edyngdon, bishop of Winchester, died, and Wykeham, upon the king's earnest recommendation, was unanimously elected by the prior and convent his successor. It has been said that Wykeham, notwithstanding his promotion in the church, was an illiterate person, but the contrary incontestably appears from the pope's bull, constituting him administrator of the spiritualities and temporalities of the see of Winchester; for in this instrument his holiness speaks of Wykeham as having been specially recommended to him, "by the testimony of many persons worthy of credit, for his knowledge of letters, his probity of life and manners, and his prudence and circumspection in affairs both spiritual and temporal:" nor are we to regard these as mere words of course, for they are rather a departure from the official language of such documents at the time, and it is not likely that even the court of Rome would choose to depart from a common form to compliment a person for the very quality in which he was notoriously deficient. His advancement to the bishopric was followed by his being appointed chancellor of England on the 17th of September, 1367. In this high office, he judiciously laid aside the style of oratory usually adopted by his clerical predecessors, and which savoured more of the pulpit than the bench, for one of a more political and popular cast. He held the chancellorship for four years, and when the king yielded to the request of his parliament, that only secular persons should be appointed to the high offices of state, he frankly, and without

any expression of chagrin, resigned the great seal to his successor, Sir Robert de Thorp. He still, however, continued the principal adviser and confidant of the king; and his influence was so generally understood, that Gregory XI. wrote to him to facilitate an accommodation between Edward and the king of France.

Soon after his being settled in the bishopric of Winchester, he began to gratify his architectural taste in the repairing of his cathedral, the whole expense of which was defrayed by himself. The care he bestowed in other parts of his episcopal duty, in reforming abuses, and establishing discipline, was equally exemplary, and involved him in a series of disputes with the idle and refractory clergy, in which he conducted himself with admirable firmness, judgment, and integrity. The foundation of a college, or of some institution for the promotion of learning and the instruction of youth, appears to have been, from an early period, a favourite design of Wykeham's. About two years after his entrance on the bishopric, he began to make purchases in the city of Oxford with that view, and he connected with his plans there the design of another college at Winchester, which should be a nursery for that of Oxford. "The plan he conceived," as stated by Lowth, "was no less than to provide for the perpetual maintenance and instruction of two hundred scholars, to afford them a liberal support, and to lead them through an entire course of education from the first elements of letters through the whole circle of the sciences, from the lowest class of grammatical learning to the highest degrees in the several faculties. It consisted of two parts, rightly forming two establishments, the one subordinate to the other. The design of the one was to lay the foundation, that of the other to raise and complete the superstructure; the former was to supply the latter with proper subjects, and the latter was to improve the advantages received in the former." The regulations by which the new institution at Oxford was to be governed, afford some useful information on the studies of the university, and on the mode in which they were classed. The establishment, according to Wood, consisted of a warden, seventy clerical scholars, ten chaplains, three clerks, and sixteen choristers. Ten of the scholars were to study the civil, and ten the canon law, while the remaining fifty were to study divinity, general philosophy, and the arts, two of the number being allowed to study medicine, and two astronomy. The building was ready for the reception of the society early in the spring of 1386, and the feelings of the time are shown by the account given of the solemnities which attended the entry of the warden and fellows into the college. On the 14th of April, and at three o'clock in the morning, they proceeded in procession to the gates chaunting the litanies, and offering up the most devout prayers to God that he would bless them and their studies. "Thus," says the historian, "was this noble work finished and completed by the bounty of the thrice worthy and never too much to be admired prelate; not so much for the eternizing of his own name, but chiefly for the public good, that the holy writ and all other sciences might the freer be dilated; that Christ might be preached, and the true worship of him augmented and sustained; that the number of clerks might be increased, which were before swept away by pestilences and other miseries of the world."<sup>1</sup> There is reason to

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii. 183.



believe that some portion of the good which the bishop is thus supposed to have had in view by the foundation of his establishments, resulted from his benevolence, and we may regard the imitation of his example by several persons of rank in subsequent years, as one of the most important aids which learning at this period received. The importance of the part which the universities of Oxford and Cambridge took in those times will be the better appreciated when it is considered that during the reigns of both Richard the Second and Henry the Fourth, learning required all the protection they could afford it, and that without the strong barrier they opposed to the political evils which were on the point of overwhelming the land that had been won from the waste, truth and genius would have again ceased their labours in despair.

The influence of the duke of Lancaster and of Alice Perrers, was successfully excited against Wykeham during Henry's dotage, and exposed him to many troubles; but on the accession of Richard II., Wykeham was again intrusted with the great seal, and by his prudent conduct amid the multiplied embarrassments of that reign, secured to himself the confidence not only of his royal master, but of the commons also. His foresight and caution, however, induced him to make a voluntary surrender of the seals in 1391, and to retire as completely as possible from political life. From this period he confined his attention almost exclusively to the affairs of his bishopric, and his favourite foundation at Oxford. He died on the 27th of September, 1404, and was interred in his own beautiful chantry in Winchester cathedral.

## John Wickliffe.

BORN A. D. 1324.—DIED A. D. 1384.

JOHN WICKLIFFE was born about the year 1324, in a village on the banks of the Tees, near Richmond, in Yorkshire. Of his parentage and earlier years little is known. History first presents him to us as a student in Queen's college, Oxford, and subsequently in Merton college, where, by the hard exercise of considerable talents, he became a respectable scholar. Having mastered Aristotle, he applied himself vigorously to the study of the scholastic theology of the day, and soon attained unrivalled skill in the puzzling jargon and subtle casuistry of the schoolmen,—a circumstance which eminently qualified him for the part he was afterwards to act against the errors and subtleties of Romanism. He then applied himself with equal assiduity to the study of the civil and canon law and the Latin fathers; and finally betook himself to the diligent investigation of the fountains of sacred truths in the holy scriptures themselves. So profound and splendid were his varied acquirements soon esteemed to be, that his contemporaries bestowed on him the honourable appellation of 'the Gospel-doctor.'

It was not till the year 1360, that Wickliffe was called to exhibit either his talents or his tenets, both of which were now displayed in defence of his university against the encroachments of the mendicant monks. Oxford in its earlier days, is reported to have often number-



*John Wicliffe*

*1327-1384*

*Published by the Trustees of the British Museum*





ed within its walls upwards of thirty thousand students. But this mighty army had been reduced to six thousand by the misconduct of the monks. "These religious," says Gilpin, "from the time of their first settlement in Oxford—which was in the year 1230—had been very troublesome neighbours to the university. They set up a different interest, aimed at a distinct jurisdiction, fomented feuds between the scholars and their superiors, and in many respects became such offensive inmates, that the university was obliged to curb their licentiousness by severe statutes. This insolent behaviour on one side, and the opposition it met with on the other, laid the foundation of an endless quarrel. The friars appealed to the pope, the scholars to the civil power; and sometimes one party and sometimes the other prevailed. Thus, the cause became general; and an opposition to the friars was looked upon as the test of a young fellow's affection to the university. It happened, while things were in this situation, that the friars had got among them a notion of which they were exceedingly fond; that Christ was a common beggar; that his disciples were beggars also; and that begging, by their example, was of gospel institution. This notion they propagated with great zeal from all the pulpits, both in Oxford and the neighbourhood to which they had access. Wickliffe—who had long held these religious in great contempt for the laziness of their lives—thought he had now found a fair occasion to expose them. He drew up, therefore, and presently published a treatise 'Against able beggary,' in which he first showed the difference between the poverty of Christ and that of the friars, and the obligations which all Christians lay under to labour in some way for the good of society. He then lashed the friars with great acrimony, proving them to be an infamous and useless set of men, wallowing in luxury, and so far from being objects of charity, that they were a reproach not only to religion but even to human society. This piece was calculated for the many, on whom it made a great impression; at the same time it increased his reputation with the learned, all men of sense and freedom admiring the work, and applauding the spirit of the author. From this time, the university began to consider him as one of her first champions; and in consequence of the reputation he had gained, he was soon afterwards promoted to the mastership of Baliol college." Archbishop Islip subsequently conferred the wardenship of Canterbury hall upon Wickliffe, styling him in his letters of institution, "a person in whose fidelity, circumspection, and industry, he very much confided." The succession of Simon Langham to the archiepiscopal dignity, led to the ejection of Wickliffe, in 1367, from his wardenship; but such was the attachment of the secular scholars to him, that they refused to obey his successor in office, and were only reduced to silence by a bull from Rome.

Wickliffe's next appearance as a controversialist was on behalf of his sovereign Edward III., against the claims put forth by the papal chair. Urban had threatened to cite the king of England before his court at Rome, for non-payment of the tribute which his predecessor, John, had bound himself to pay the holy see. Edward had laid the matter before his parliament, and that assembly had unanimously declared that King John could not, of his own power and authority, subject his kingdom to a foreign power, and that consequently they would support their

sovereign in his resistance to the pope's pretensions. The pope found advocates of his claims, however : of these, one in particular, a monk, profound, subtle, and eloquent, put forth a treatise, which produced on the public mind a strong impression against the king. Wickliffe sat down to pen an answer to this work, and, bringing to his task equal talents, with the auxiliaries of common sense and sacred scripture, completely overwhelmed his antagonist. This brought him into more notice, and procured for him the patronage of government. In 1372, he was elected professor of divinity at Oxford, and thus placed on the summit of an eminence, whence, in all directions, he could pour streams of gospel light into the surrounding darkness. The appearance of such a man in such a place was as novel and startling as that of a burning citadel on the brow of a promontory at the hour of midnight, and nearly as astounding and universal was the alarm and excitement produced by it. The glory of the scholastic theology had now reached its acme. The schoolmen, infatuated by the perverted philosophy of Aristotle, were busy perplexing truth instead of elucidating it, and pertinaciously pursuing the most frivolous inquiries under the title of learning, to the utter extinction of all piety and all peace. While such themes were the subject of meditation in the cloister, and of prelection in the academic chair, what was to be expected from the pulpit but kindred disquisitions equally impious and useless? These were intermingled with the dreams of the fathers and the traditions of the church, with false miracles and legendary tales, as destitute of truth as repugnant to common sense. The former satisfied the educated and metaphysical ; the latter gratified the passion of the wonder-loving multitude ; and thus the delusions of Romanism were fostered, and the interests of the monastic orders advanced with the public. In this state of things, if Wickliffe's situation was advantageous, it was also eminently critical ; and at the commencement of his career there was need of consummate prudence. Aware that established customs, old feelings, and deep-rooted prejudices, were not to be at once assailed and overturned, he was contented at first with frequently treating his audiences to logical and metaphysical disputations, thus accustoming them to hear novelties of doctrine propounded, and ancient opinions controverted. As nothing was admired in the schools but discussions on time, space, substance, identity, and such like themes, Wickliffe at first expatiated only on these ; but with his prelections on such unedifying topics, he gradually intermixed and pushed as far as was consistent with prudence his new opinions in divinity, sounding as it were the minds of his hearers, till, at length, finding the water of sufficient depth, and hourly increasing, he set every sail, and scudded fearlessly along before the breeze of truth and reason, steering constantly by the compass of revelation. His celebrity soon attracted a vast concourse of students, and his opinions were gradually, though silently, imbibed by a host of pupils. Nor was he less admired in the pulpit than in the schools. He amused not the learned among his auditors with the subtleties of scholastic disputation, nor the vulgar with panegyrics on saints, and accounts of miracles. The doctrines of religion, as far as it was then safe to promulgate them, and the duties of the christian life, he at all times seriously enforced upon his audience : but when fitting opportunity offered, he failed not to denounce the corruptions of the church, the profligacy

of the clergy, and the usurpations of the pope, with a force of argument which flashed conviction on every unprejudiced mind, and with a warmth and vehemence, such as to show that he understood his ground. The result of all this was, that he soon acquired a vast multitude of adherents of all ranks, and stood forth in the public eye the most prominent object of the day for esteem or hatred.

In 1374, the crown, mindful of past obligations, not only conferred on Wickliffe a valuable benefice, but employed him on an embassy to the pope concerning the liberties of the church of England. We soon afterwards find him again employed in a diplomatic character, being delegated with several barons to the court of the duke of Milan. His intercourse with the authorities of the pontificate supplied him with a more intimate knowledge of its projects and policy, nor was he slow in availing himself of it, for, from this period, in his lectures and pulpit discourses, we find him pouring forth fiery invectives against the abuses of popery. He reproves in the harshest language the profligate lives of the clergy, and impugns with all freedom the unscriptural doctrines which they inculcated; he upbraids them with ignorance, hypocrisy, and cunning selfishness, and even the pope himself fails not to receive his censures. Correction is always grievous to him that forsaketh the way; this holds true, even when the phrase of reproof is most mild and measured; how much more so when censure is conveyed in such acrimonious language, as Wickliffe, in his honest indignation, used towards his opponents. The mingled cries of interest and ignorance and bigotry rent the air, flew across the seas, and entered the ears of his holiness, while malice extracted from his lectures and writings no fewer than nineteen charges of heresy which were immediately exhibited against him. These were: That there is one only universal church, which is the university (or entire member) of the predestinate. Paul was never a member of the devil, although (before his conversion) he did certain acts like unto the acts of the church malignant. The reprobate are not parts of the (invisible) church, for that no part of the same finally falleth from her, because the charity (or grace) of predestination, which bindeth the church together, never faileth. The reprobate, although he be sometimes in grace, according to present justice (that is, by a present appearance of outward righteousness) yet is he never a part of the holy church (in reality) and the predestinate is ever a member of the church, although sometimes he fall from grace *adventitiâ*, but not from the grace of predestination: even taking the church for the convocation of the predestinate, whether they be in grace or not, according to present justice, (that is, whether they be converted already, or yet remain to be so, the predestinate or elect constitute as such, that invisible church which God the Father hath chosen, and God the Son redeemed). The grace of predestination is the bond wherewith the body of the church, and every member of the same, is indissolubly joined to Christ their head. That the eucharist, after consecration, was not the real body of Christ, but only an emblem or sign of it. That the church of Rome was no more the head of the universal church than any other church, and that St Peter had no greater authority given him than the rest of the apostles. That the pope had no more jurisdiction in the exercise of the keys than any other priest. That if the church misbehaved, it was not only lawful but meritorious to dispossess her of her temporalities.



That when a prince, or temporal lord, was convinced that the church made an ill use of her endowments, he was bound, under pain of damnation, to take them away. That the gospel was sufficient to direct a Christian in the conduct of his life. That neither the pope nor any other prelate ought to have prisons for the punishing offenders against the discipline of the church, but that every person ought to be left at his liberty in the conduct of his life.<sup>1</sup>

The pope, burning with desire to overwhelm so formidable an innovator, issued his mandate to the bishops of London and Canterbury, commanding them to apprehend and imprison Wickliffe until further orders as to his disposal should arrive from Rome. But the king, now advanced in years, having consigned the management of affairs to the duke of Lancaster, that nobleman is supposed to have embraced his religious views, and at all events effectually shielded him from persecution. Many of the nobility and gentry also espoused his party. Among these were Lord Henry Percy, John de Montacute, Sir Lewis Clifford, Sir John Pecke, Sir William Nevyle, Sir Thomas Latimer, Sir Richard Sturie, Sir John Oldcastle, Sir Thomas Trussell, Sir Reginald de Hylton, and the poets Chaucer and Gower. At this time Wickliffe styled himself '*peculiaris regis clericus*,' but had not openly departed from the Roman church. The pope sent his nuncio to Oxford to accuse the university of coldness in the cause of the church; and enjoining that body, under the severest penalties, to deliver up their divinity professor to the bishops of London and Canterbury. But such was the attachment of the university to Wickliffe, that they hesitated about receiving the nuncio at all; and if he was received—which is doubtful—his injunctions were utterly disregarded.

Wickliffe was now cited to appear before the bishops at St Paul's within thirty days. But betwixt the issuing of this summons and the day of appearance, the important question was agitated in parliament, whether or not on any emergency the pecuniary impositions of the pope might be lawfully disobeyed. On this very simple point there were various opinions, and it was at length agreed to refer the matter to Wickliffe who was deemed the best casuist of his time. This was a trying hour. The fires of persecution had begun to rage, and the papal thunders to war around him. Should he decide in favour of government, this would incense the papacy, and heat the furnace of their wrath seven times more than formerly; if again he decided in favour of the pope, this was to incur the displeasure of the throne, and deprive him of the royal protection. In these circumstances Wickliffe might well have paused and hesitated, but he flinched not, and calmly resolved the question in the affirmative, offering to prove it on the principles of the law of Christ. This affair rendered him much more odious to the court of Rome than all his former heresies; but the day was at hand which was expected to seal his doom.

On the day appointed for his appearance before the bishops, Wickliffe, accompanied by the duke of Lancaster, and Lord Percy, earl marshal of England, presented himself at St Paul's. The bishops were confounded at seeing him enter supported by the two greatest personages in the realm; and the metropolitan prelate, losing his temper,

<sup>1</sup> See Middleton's Biog. Evang.

suffered himself to be led into violent altercation with the duke of Lancaster. The trial never came on; for the vast concourse assembled within and without the building joined in the altercation, and the whole became a scene of uproar and confusion.<sup>2</sup> At last the meeting dispersed, and Wickliffe was anew summoned to meet the bishops at Lambeth. Here his enemies were again disappointed; for they had no sooner met, than Sir Lewis Clifford entered the assembly, and, in an authoritative tone commanded them to desist from proceeding to any decision against Wickliffe. The menace of Sir Lewis meant more than met the ear, and Wickliffe was again dismissed with an injunction to broach his heresies no more either in the schools or in the pulpit. He made no promises, however, and that he purposed no obedience was evinced by his future conduct.

Gregory XI. dying in 1378, a new pope was elected, who conducted himself with such insufferable arrogance that he lost the affection of his subjects, and disgusted the cardinals, which led to the election of a rival pope. These two infallibles contended for power with the most indecent violence; they called each other liars, and pronounced against each other the sentence of excommunication. Wickliffe was not asleep the while, but viewed the fight of the holy fathers as an omen for good: and while they were labouring each to prove the other an usurper and impostor, he was doing his best to prove that such was the true character of both. His zeal and talents were alike roused, and he sent forth into the world two tracts entitled 'The Schism of the Roman Pontiffs,' and 'The Truth of Scripture.' In the latter of these publications he contended for the translation of the word of God into the vernacular tongues, and insisted on the sufficiency of the Bible as a directory in doctrine and discipline. Soon after this, he was taken very ill, and fears were entertained lest his disease should prove fatal,—a catastrophe anxiously hoped for by the monks, who also cherished an expectation, that in these sorrowful circumstances he might be induced to revoke what he had written against them, and what had brought them into such contempt. To solicit this, a solemn deputation, consisting of a friar from each of the mendicant orders, was sent to him. Being admitted into his presence, they declared their object, and were listened to in silence; he then ordered his attendants to raise him from his pillow, and with a severe countenance indicative of vast energy of purpose, and in a firm tone, though erewhile so feeble, exclaimed, "I shall not die but live, and farther declare the evil deeds of the friars!" The deputation retired in confusion; and Wickliffe, as soon as he recovered, set about his promised work of reformation.

He uniformly acted on a system wisely planned and vigorously pursued. He saw that the want of a version of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue was a source of the most serious evils, and in order to supply such a desideratum, he had from an early period been labouring to effect a translation. When the Scriptures were first rendered into Latin, it was the universal language of the western world, and as such proved an admirable vehicle of conveyance for religious truth; but in time it ceased to be spoken, and was superseded by a variety of dialects, possessing some more, some less affinity to it. Latin

<sup>2</sup> Fuller.

was no longer acquired on the breast and in the nursery, but, to be learned, needed to be formally studied. The Bible became thenceforth a sealed book to the multitude, and was understood only by the clergy, to whom the people owed any glimpse which they possessed of its meaning and doctrines, and who might impart, or withhold and gloss and modify at pleasure.

Wickliffe wished to reduce the priests to the capacity of mere expounders of God's law, and to enable the people to judge for themselves. This he deemed the likeliest way to erect an effectual barrier against the progress of that baleful stream, which rolling over the world overwhelmed and destroyed every vestige of Apostolic Christianity both in doctrine and practice. In order to prepare the world for the translation of the divine volume, which he had finished, he expatiated in his writings and sermons on the duty and right of the people to read the Scriptures, and reprimanded their spiritual guardians for shutting up these wells of living water. Having used every means that his bold and prolific genius could suggest, or his restless industry effect, to inspire the nation with a desire to read this inestimable volume, in the year 1380 he published his translation of both Testaments. This was the heaviest calamity—the most dismal omen that had ever befallen the Romish polity; it was the first spark of a conflagration destined to consume the whole citadel of Romish corruption and error. It is generally supposed that Wickliffe's was the first translation of the whole Scriptures, though some maintain that Richard Fitz-Ralph, archbishop of Armagh, and others that John de Trevisa, a Cornish man, both of whom lived in the reign of Edward III., had already achieved this noble undertaking. It is at least certain that they had commenced to do so, and had in part performed the task. A Saxon version of the Psalms had also been executed by our great Alfred, and the venerable Bede is supposed to have rendered the entire Scriptures into that language. But, however this may have been, the version of Wickliffe superseded that of his predecessors, and was the only one in use until the invention of printing and the revival of letters, when Tindale prepared and published that edition in the English language which cost him his life at the stake. Wickliffe executed his version from the vulgate, not that he regarded it as of equal authority with the Hebrew and Greek copies of the Scriptures, but because he did not understand these languages well enough to translate from them.<sup>3</sup>

The sword of Wickliffe was now drawn, he had burst the toils of priestcraft, and, rushing into the arena of combat, summoned the world to attend the decision. The forces of the court of Rome were also put in motion. The thunders of the pontiff shook the seven hills, and extended their hoarse murmurs to the British shores; but the reformer was no longer to be dismayed by the vain anathemas of Rome, though these crewhile and even then had made thrones totter and monarchs

<sup>3</sup> Of this translation several manuscript copies are extant in our public libraries. Wickliffe's New Testament was published in folio, in 1731, by the Rev. John Lewis. It has also been republished by Mr Baber of the British Museum. The following three verses of the 8th chapter of the Romans may serve as a specimen of this version: "And we witen, that to men that louen God alle thing is worchen to gidre into good to hem that afir purpose been clepid seyntis. For thilk that he knew bifore, he bifore ordeynede bi grace to be maad lyk to the ymage of his Sone, that he, be the firste bigeten among manye britheren. And thilke that he bifore ordeynede to blisse, hem he clipede, and whiche he clipede hem he justifiede, and which he justifiede, and hem he glorifiede."



tremble. Amid the terrible menaces of the prelates, and the foul abuse of the inferior clergy, he went on unmoved, safe under the protection of heaven, and happy under the approbation of a good conscience. Having proved the power and temper of the weapon which he now wielded, he proceeded to apply it to the dogmas of the infallible church. His first stroke was at a doctrine, at once the most repugnant to reason and the most revered by the Romanists—transubstantiation. This supreme absurdity was begotten by a French monk in the ninth century, and introduced into England about the middle of the eleventh. Ignorance favoured its progress, and the clergy, eager to embrace whatever tended to promote their advantage, laid hold on this tenet as one calculated to inspire unbounded reverence for them by exalting the people's notions of their spiritual power. Accordingly, its adoption became general, and it was at length ratified in the thirteenth century by the third Lateran council. Wickliffe first oppugned it in his lectures at Oxford, and afterwards published his sentiments under the title of 'Sixteen Conclusions,' which he offered to defend publicly in that school of learning. The chancellor, however, opposed this, knowing that no man was equal to Wickliffe's disputation, and fearing lest a triumph might increase his party, and give a still wider currency to his opinions. He persuaded twelve doctors of the university to join him in signing a programme, whereby academic members were prohibited from holding or defending the same doctrines with Wickliffe under pain of imprisonment and suspension. This was a short and easy method of refutation, but the reformer was not to be thus silenced, he appealed to his old friends, the parliament, but the king having no farther immediate need of his services, and regardless of the progress of truth when his own power was secure, refused to interfere; and Lancaster now told him, that in such things he should submit to his superiors. While he laboured to emancipate government from the political thralldom by which the pontiff had oppressed it, Wickliffe was hailed, and praised, and rewarded; but when he began to knock off the spiritual fetters of his fellow men, and to deliver them from the direst bondage, he found himself alone.

The hierarchy now ventured again to summon him before an ecclesiastical court. He appeared at Oxford on the appointed day, and before the bishops and doctors read his extorted confession. The majority appeared satisfied with his explanation, and the court was obliged to dismiss him without censure; but the wily chancellor and some of the monks considered the confession rather as a vindication than a recantation of sentiments—and so it really was. They, therefore, singly and daily assailed him with mock arguments and real abuse; but, in the midst of all opposition, he persevered in his purpose, and had the satisfaction to behold his followers daily multiplying throughout the kingdom. Such was the progress of truth, that even popish writers confessed, that half the people were Lollards and half Wickliffites. The Catholics raged and wondered; Wickliffe held his peace, and laboured on, till his success waxed beyond endurance, and Archbishop Courtney, a man entirely devoted to the interests of the Romish see, put forth his arm to crush the reformer. He brought a bill into parliament, the object of which was to arrest and imprison all venders of

heresy during the pleasure of the holy church.<sup>4</sup> This bill passed the house of lords, but it was rejected by the commons. The primate now applied to Richard II. for letters patent, addressed to the chancellor of Oxford, commanding him to banish Wickliffe and his disciples from the university. The chancellor refused to execute the order, assigning as the reason, that he would thereby endanger his own life and the peace of the university; but the primate was not to be baffled, and became loud and peremptory. Wickliffe saw the storm gathering, and to avoid it, quitted Oxford for ever, and retired to his rectory of Lutterworth, where he continued to preach and to defend his opinions. It was doubtless to this champion of truth a moment of exquisite anguish, when he took a final farewell of those schools, the most renowned in the world, over which he had presided with unrivalled distinction, and wherein with unshackled boldness he had expounded the doctrines of wisdom.

The contest of the popes was still raging. Urban VI. was resolved to try a more substantial mode of warfare than had yet been adopted, and bring the quarrel to an issue by force of arms. Urban applied to England for men and money; and to all who in any way abetted his cause, there was granted the utmost profusion of indulgencies and pardons. The honest heart of Wickliffe could not conceal its horror and indignation at such a procedure. He denounced the pope in terms of the most unmeasured disgust and abhorrence, as the enemy of all good, declaring both the popes two false priests, open antichrists. "Why," he asks, "will not the proud priest of Rome grant full pardon to all men to live in love and peace, as he does to all such as fight and slay those who never offended him?" By this the wrath of the pope was excited to the uttermost, and he summoned the bold disturber to Rome to answer for his misdemeanors. He wrote the pope, pleading his health as one excuse for non-appearance, having been recently attacked by palsy, but informing his holiness at the same time, that "Christ taught him more obeish to God than to man." This seems by his holiness to have been received as glad tidings, and viewing it as a presage of mortality, his terrors were somewhat abated. It was hoped that he, whom nothing else could quiet, would soon be silenced by death, and henceforth the veteran polemic was permitted to live and labour with comparatively little molestation.

About two years after this, he was a second time attacked with palsy in December 1384, while attending divine service with his people at Lutterworth, and after an illness of three days he expired.<sup>5</sup> He was buried in the chancel of his church, where his ashes reposed, till the hand of violence disturbed their peace. This shocking violation took place in consequence of a decree of the council of Constance in 1415, when, after the condemnation of 45 articles, relative to his doctrines, the reformer himself was pronounced to have died an obstinate heretic, and his bones were ordered to be dug up that they might be separated from the ashes of the faithful, and cast upon a dunghill. Accordingly, they were disinterred, burnt, and thrown into the Swift, a streamlet which runs by Lutterworth. Thus died honest John Wickliffe, a man who loved truth, who sought and found it, and gave himself up to its

<sup>4</sup> Rot. Parl. iii. 184.

<sup>5</sup> Wood.

guidance ; who feared God but not man, and pursued his Master's glory but not his own. Wickliffe was the Daniel of his era,—he dared to be singular, and to offend even to exasperation a power the most dreadful and overwhelming and implacable that then existed. He stood almost alone on the earth ; unimpressed by the example, and unawed by the execrations of adoring millions, he indignantly refused to fall down before the idol. He appears to have been a man at once amiable and ardent—bold and cautious—a lover of civil and sacred freedom, yet one who rebuked every species of licentiousness with the freedom and severity of an apostle. In his doctrinal opinions, he held all the points afterwards maintained by Calvinists against Arminians. In the matter of church government, his views strictly corresponded with those of the Congregationalists. To the Romish hierarchy, Wickliffe was more mischievous when dead than while alive. His books conferred on him a spiritual omnipresence, for by those he spoke at once in a multitude of places, and to tens of thousands. When the Romanists could do no more, they bestowed an epitaph on their arch-opponent. This singular article was expressed as follows :—“The devil's instrument, church's enemy, people's confusion, heretic's idol, hypocrite's mirror, schism's broacher, hatred's sower, lie's forger, flattery's sink—who, at his death, despaired like Cain, and stricken by the terrible judgment of God, breathed forth his wicked soul to the dark mansion of the black devil !”

## Archbishop Courtney.

BORN A. D. 1341.—DIED A. D. 1396.

WILLIAM COURTNEY, archbishop of Canterbury, in the reign of Richard II., was the fourth son of Hugh Courtney, earl of Devonshire, by Margaret, daughter of Bohun, earl of Hereford. He was born in the year 1341, and received education at Oxford, where he applied himself with singular diligence and success to the study of the civil and canon law. On entering into holy orders, he soon obtained no fewer than three distinct prebends, and in 1369, he was promoted to the see of Hereford, from which he was translated, in 1375, to that of London. In a synod held at London in 1376, Bishop Courtney distinguished himself by his strenuous opposition to the king's demand of a new subsidy ; and soon after he incurred the censure of the high court of chancery for having presumed to publish a bull of the pope without the king's consent. In the last year of Edward III., he undertook, with the assistance of Archbishop Sudbury, to investigate into the new heresies then propagated by Wickliffe. The result of this interference, we have already noticed in our sketch of the intrepid reformer himself.

In 1381, Courtney was appointed lord-high-chancellor of England, and the same year was elevated to the see of Canterbury on the death of Sudbury. One of his earliest measures, as primate, was to call a synod of divines, in which four-and-twenty opinions zealously inculcated by the new preachers were censured : ten as heretical, fourteen as erroneous and of dangerous tendency. It chanced, that just as the synod



were about to enter on business, an earthquake shook the building in which they were assembled, whereupon some of the prelates flung down their papers, and crying out that the business upon which they were assembled was evidently displeasing to God, resolved to proceed no further in the matter. "The archbishop alone," says Gilpin, "remained unmoved; with equal spirit and address, he chid their superstitious fears, and told them, that if the earthquake portended any thing, it portended the downfall of heresy; that as noxious vapours are lodged in the bowels of the earth, and are expelled by these violent concussions, so by their strenuous endeavours, the kingdom should be purified from the pestilential taint of heresy which had infected it in every part." Wickliffe's partisans drew an opposite augury from the omen. "The earth tremblide," he writes, "for they put an heresie on Crist and the sayntes in hevyn;" but the anecdote sufficiently illustrates the courage and superior firmness of the archbishop.

In 1392, in a parliament held at Winchester, Courtney, who was probably suspected of privately abetting the papal encroachments, presented an answer to certain articles which had been exhibited by the commons in relation to the pope's pretensions. Soon after this, he obtained from the pope a grant of fourpence in the pound on all ecclesiastical benefices, but the collection of this impost was stoutly opposed by the bishop of Lincoln, and ere the matter could be decided, the archbishop died on the 31st of July, 1396. He was buried at Maidstone in Kent where he had founded a college of secular priests. Courtney appears to have been a staunch adherent of the court of Rome,—bold yet politic; in some instances he exhibited considerable strength of mind and liberality of views. In the parliamentary history some notice is taken of the speech which, as chancellor of England, he delivered at the opening of the parliament, in 1382. It is a pretty fair dissertation on the evils of bad government, and the necessity of an upright and steady administration of the law to the peace and prosperity of a country.

## Archbishop Arundel.

BORN A. D. 1353.—DIED A. D. 1413.

THOMAS ARUNDEL, second son of Robert Fitz-Alan, earl of Arundel and Warren, and archbishop of Canterbury in the reigns of Richard II., Henry IV., and Henry V., was born in the year 1353. Long before this time, the pope had exercised a kind of feudal authority in England, and had claimed the right of bestowing benefices, and even of nominating to them by provision, or anticipation, before they became actually void. Against the whole of this usurpation the English government had protested; and, in the year 1350, by a statute of 25th Edward III., the pope's authority, in filling up the vacant bishoprics, was expressly disallowed. Still, however, in defiance of the English law, the pope continued to exercise this prerogative,—a circumstance to which Arundel owed his preferment from the archdeaconry of Taunton to the bishopric of Ely. He received the mitre at an earlier period of life than has been known in any other instance in the whole annals of the

English church. The king had written to the chapter, desiring them to elect his own confessor, John Woodroof, to the vacant bishopric; but the monks unanimously chose one Henry Wakefield, whereupon the pope stepped in, and, by virtue of his apostolic authority, declared the youthful archdeacon of Taunton, bishop of Ely. At 21 years of age he was consecrated bishop, and, two years afterwards, was enthroned at Ely with the usual solemnities.<sup>1</sup> Godwin relating this singularly judicious exercise of pontifical power, humorously describes this venerable prelate as full of years and gravity,—an old man, with one foot in the grave, who had almost completed his 22d year—“*annosum quendam, quemque virum facile credas gravissimum.*”—“*Cum jam,*” he adds, “*O capularem senem! ætatis annum explevisset fere vicesimum secundum.*” Indeed the bishop seems to have carried with him, through every stage of his advancement, a puerile taste for show and splendour. While in the see of Ely, he presented the church and palace with a curious table of massy gold enriched with precious stones: and, after his accession in 1388, by virtue of the pope’s bull, to the archiepiscopal see of York, besides building a magnificent palace for himself and his successors, he gave to the church many pieces of plate and other rich ornaments. In 1396, when, by the same authority, he was raised to the summit of ecclesiastical preferment, and enthroned with great pomp at Canterbury, he presented to the cathedral church several rich vestments, a mitre enchased with jewels, a silver gilt crosier, and a gold chalice.

During the ten years which preceded Arundel’s appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury, he occupied, with some interruptions, the honourable and important post of lord-high-chancellor of England. He took a leading part in the first attempt which was made to deliver the nation from the oppression of Richard II., by obtaining a commission for the duke of Gloucester, the earl of Arundel, and others, to assume the regency, and was banished from his see, and from the kingdom, on the parliament declaring the said commission “prejudicial to the king’s prerogative and dignity.” Pope Boniface IX., however, seized this occasion of expressing his displeasure against the king and parliament of England for having attempted to deprive him of his provisional jurisdiction in that country, and gave Arundel an honourable reception at the court of Rome, nominated him to the archbishopric of St Andrews, and declared his intention of giving him other preferments in England, whereupon the king wrote an expostulatory letter to the pope, in which he describes Thomas Arundel as a man of a turbulent, seditious temper, who was endeavouring to undermine his government, and entreats that his holiness would not, by any act of his, “create such misunderstandings between the crown and the mitre, as it might prove difficult to remove;” at the same time adding: “If you have a mind to provide for him otherwise, we have nothing to object, only we cannot allow him to dip in our dish.”<sup>2</sup> The pope not choosing to hazard a quarrel, withheld his intended favours from Arundel, and, at the king’s request, promoted Roger Walden, dean of York, to the see of Canterbury.

<sup>1</sup> Bentham’s Hist. and Antiq. of the Church of Ely, p. 164—166.

<sup>2</sup> Parker’s Antiq. Brit.

Early in Henry's reign, the exigencies of the state requiring large supplies, a design was formed of seizing the revenues of the church, and applying them to the public service ; and in the parliament held at Coventry in 1404, it was urged, that the wealth of the church might well be spared to the necessities of the state ; that the clergy who had accumulated immense revenues, lived in idleness and luxury, and contributed little to the public benefit, while the laity were hazarding both their persons and fortunes in the service of their country ; and that, therefore, in a moment of public necessity, it was reasonable to have recourse to this fund. Arundel, who was present, to avert the blow which threatened the church, pleaded that the clergy had always contributed more to the public service than the laity ; that though they did not serve the king in person in his wars, yet they did military service by their tenants ; and that they were at least as serviceable to the king by their prayers as the laity by their arms. The speaker of the house, Sir John Cheney, observed, that he thought the prayers of the church a very slender supply at best, and that its lands would do the nation much more service ; whereupon the archbishop warmly retorted, and concluded by boldly defying the house to invade the rights and possessions of the church. The commons admired the archbishop's resolution, and confessed the impolicy of their expedient. While Arundel thus zealously defended the temporalities of the church, he discovered equal zeal for the preservation of its internal constitution. The Lollards and Wickliffites excited the jealousy of the metropolitan, and he adopted violent and unjustifiable measures for the suppression of these rising sects. Supported by the body of the clergy assembled in convocation at St Paul's, in London, who complained of the strange degeneracy and contumacy of the students in a university hitherto exemplary for its adherence to the Catholic faith, and for its order and correct behaviour, the archbishop sent delegates to the university of Oxford to inquire into the state of opinions among the students, many of whom were suspected of Wickliffitism ; and a committee was appointed by the university to sit in inquisition, under the authority of the delegates upon heretical books, particularly those of Wickliffe, and to examine such persons as were suspected of favouring this new heresy. The report of these inquisitors was transmitted to the primate, who confirmed their censures ; and the persecution thus raised, was carried by this bigot to an absurd and cruel extremity ; he even went so far as to solicit from the pope a bull for digging up Wickliffe's bones, which, however, was wisely refused him. Upon the authority of the horrid act for burning heretics, passed in the reign of Henry IV., a Lollard, in the year 1410, was consigned to the stake ; and at the commencement of the reign of Henry V., Lord Cobham, one of the principal patrons of the sect, was indicted by the primate, convicted of heresy, and sentenced to the flames. He also procured a synodal constitution, which forbade the translation of the scriptures into the vulgar tongue. Soon after pronouncing sentence of excommunication against Cobham, the archbishop was seized with an inflammation in his throat, which speedily terminated his life, on the 20th of February, 1413. The Lollards, who partook of the superstitious character of the times, imputed this sudden illness and death to the just judgment of God. Bishop Godwin says : "*Justo Dei judicio factum ferunt, ut is qui verbum Dei,*



animæ pabulum subtraxerat popularibus, clausis per anginam aut morbum aliquem consimilem faucibus, aliquanto ante mortem tempore, nec verbum potuerit fari, nec cibi vel minimum deglutire, adeoque mutus fameque tandem enectus inediâ interierit."

## Archbishop Chichele.

BORN A. D. 1362.—DIED A. D. 1433.

ON the death of Arundel, Henry Chichele was elevated to the primacy. Chichele was born at Higham-Ferrers in Northamptonshire, and educated at Winchester school and New College. Under the patronage of Richard Metford, bishop of Salisbury, he rose rapidly through various ecclesiastical preferments and dignities, until, in the year 1407, he was employed by Henry IV. in three successive embassies to Rome and the court of France. During his residence at the Roman court in 1408, Pope Gregory XII. presented him with the bishopric of St David's; and, in the following year, he was deputed, with Hallum, bishop of Salisbury, and Chillingdon, prior of Canterbury, to represent the English church in the council of Pisa. In May, 1410, the renewal of negotiations for a truce betwixt France and England, was chiefly entrusted to Chichele; and on the accession of Henry V., he was sent a third time into France to negotiate a peace.

Chichele obtained the primacy at a critical moment. The king had made demands on the court of France, which promised to end in a rupture with that country, and large supplies were wanted. The parliament urged Henry to seize the revenues of the church, and apply them to the use of the crown. The clergy, alarmed for the whole, wisely resolved to sacrifice a part in the hope of saving the rest, and voluntarily agreed to surrender all the alien priories which depended on capital abbeys in Normandy, and had been bequeathed to these abbeys while that province remained united to England, and Chichele was deputed to lay their offer before parliament, and recommend it to the king's acceptance. The offer was accepted, and the archbishop was the first to inform the French envoys at the English court, that the only terms on which peace could be preserved was the instant and full restoration to his sovereign, of all the territories which had ever been possessed by his predecessors. It is alleged by some historians that Chichele secretly wished to plunge Henry into a war, as the most effectual means of diverting the blow which then threatened the church. But, while it is certain that this prelate was one of the most strenuous advisers of a war with France, it is not less certain that he needed not to create by any artificial or secret policy, the love of foreign warfare in his sovereign's mind; the disposition already existed there in sufficient strength, and in what manner the archbishop could have repressed it, supposing a pacific course to have been clearly the better policy at the time, cannot now be determined without a much more intimate knowledge of the state of parties in England at the time than we possess. During this period, however, besides taking the lead in the affairs of state at home, the archbishop twice accompanied the king in his campaigns in France.

During the minority of Henry VI., and the regency of the duke of Gloucester, Chichele retired, in a great measure, from public life, and employed himself in visiting the several dioceses in his province. The principles of Wickliffe had now made considerable progress throughout the country, yet it does not appear that the holders of the new doctrines found in this primate quite so bitter and relentless a foe as they had experienced in his predecessor, Arundel. History has done ample justice to the spirit with which he resisted the pretensions of the pope to the disposal of ecclesiastical benefices in England. In this he was supported by a majority of the bishops, as well as by the university of Oxford, and the general feeling of the nation. Martin V. threatened England with excommunication in consequence of this display of sentiment; but the university of Oxford hesitated not to assure his holiness that they regarded Chichele as standing in the sanctuary of God, "a firm wall that heresy could not shake, nor simony undermine," and the death of Martin himself soon after relieved the archbishop of further trouble in this matter from Rome.

In later life, Chichele, who had always proved himself a munificent patron of the universities, conceived the plan of founding another college at Oxford. Like his predecessor Wykeham, he had amassed considerable wealth, which he determined to expend in promoting the cause of education. The foundation of All Souls' college was the result of these intentions. The whole college was finished in 1444. In the first charter, Henry VI. assumed the title of founder at the archbishop's solicitation, who appears to have paid the monarch this compliment with a view to secure his patronage for the institution, but the full exercise of legislative authority was reserved to the prelate himself as co-founder. A few days before his death, the archbishop completed a body of statutes for the regulation of his college, modelled after those of Wykeham. The society was appointed to consist of a warden and twenty fellows, sixteen of whom were to study the civil and canon law, and the rest were to devote themselves to philosophy, the arts, and theology.

In 1442, Chichele applied to Pope Eugenius for permission to resign his office into more able hands, he being now nearly eighty years old, and, as he pathetically urges, "heavy, laden, aged, infirm, and weak beyond measure." He died, however, before the issue of his application could be known, on the 12th of April, 1433, and was interred, with great solemnity, in the cathedral of Canterbury. His character is that of an able statesman, and learned and liberal prelate. In the former character he exerted himself with considerable success in conciliating the parliament and the nation towards the church, and in supporting the dignity of the crown; in the latter, he did much to improve the tone and habits of the clergy, and to repress those abuses which the spirit of the times engendered. His memory, however, is not altogether free of the charge of intolerance. Several persons were committed to the flames during his primacy for the crime of Lollardy; others were condemned to perpetual imprisonment, and a variety of other severe punishments. By one of his constitutions, three of the principal inhabitants of every parish were solemnly sworn to make diligent inquiry and search after all Lollards, and every thing savouring of Lollardy, within their district, and to transmit a report in writing to their arch-

deacon twice every year. He was succeeded in the primacy by Stafford, bishop of Bath.

## Cardinal Beaufort.

DIED A. D. 1447.

HENRY BEAUFORT, bishop of Winchester, and cardinal priest in the Roman church, was the son of John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, by his third wife, Catherine Swinford. His studies were conducted partly at both English universities, and partly at Aix-la-Chapelle, at the latter of which places he devoted himself chiefly to the study of the civil and common law.<sup>1</sup> His connexion with royalty insured him early advancement in the church. In 1397, he was appointed bishop of Lincoln, by Pope Boniface IX.; in 1399, chancellor of the university of Oxford; and in 1404, lord-high-chancellor of England. On the death of Wykeham he was translated to the see of Winchester.

We may form some idea of the wealth which this fortunate prelate commanded, from the circumstance, that when Henry V. was meditating his expedition against France, and his commons had declared themselves unable to grant farther subsidies, Beaufort alone, and unaided, lent his royal nephew the sum of twenty thousand pounds<sup>2</sup>—a sum which must have appeared quite enormous in those days. Godwin says that this loan was intended to divert the king's attention from the overgrown revenues of the clergy, whose wealth had now arrived at its highest pitch. This transaction occurred in 1417. In the same year Beaufort took a journey to the Holy Land. Whilst passing through Constance in this journey, he attended the general council then sitting in that city, and materially contributed by his arguments and influence to the election of Martin III. to the vacant papal chair.

In 1424, Beaufort was appointed, for the fourth time, lord-high-chancellor of England. Henry VI. was at this period in his minority, and Humphrey, duke of Gloucester held the regency. Intrigue, however, prevailed in the cabinet, and the animosity of Beaufort and Gloucester threatened to involve the country in a civil war. "The English Pope," says one historian, "in his magnificence and grandeur seemed so much to outshine the protector himself, though on the throne almost, that he drew his odium and hatred upon him; which was so increased by the haughty spirit of the bishop—who, being the protector's uncle and the pope's legate, carried himself as if he were much above him both in nature and grace—that the protector could not endure his pride, and so an implacable enmity grew between them; and great parties were raised on both sides for each other's defence, the bishop's dependencies, money, and church-power, making him able to contend with the protector himself."<sup>3</sup> Holinshed has inserted in his 'Chronicles,' a letter from Beaufort to his nephew the duke of Bedford, then regent of France, soliciting his presence in England to mediate betwixt him and Gloucester:—"For by my troth," adds the prelate, "if you tarry, we shall put this land in jeopardy with a field; such a brother you have

<sup>1</sup> Godwin de Præsal. Angl.

<sup>2</sup> Speed, 803.

<sup>3</sup> Complete Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 351.



here. God make him a good man!"<sup>4</sup> Bedford, complying with the bishop's request, arrived in England in December 1425, and immediately convoked an assembly of the nobles, at St Alban's, to hear and determine the matter; but the two parties instantly assumed such a hostile appearance towards each other, that it was deemed prudent to delay the business for a time. On the 25th of March, the peers again met at Leicester, when the duke exhibited six articles of impeachment against his rival the bishop of Winchester. The substance of these articles was as follows:—That the bishop had prevented the protector from obtaining access to the tower; that he had secretly concerted measures for getting the young king removed from Eltham to Windsor; that he had compassed the death of the protector; that he had made an attempt on the life of the late king, by the hands of a hired assassin; that during the sickness of Henry IV. he had advised his son to assume the government, without waiting for his father's decease; that in his letter to the duke of Bedford he had plainly avowed his intention of stirring up a rebellion in the nation. To these articles the bishop exhibited distinct answers; and a committee having been appointed to examine the respective allegations of the parties, the bishop was pronounced clear of the whole charges preferred against him; whereupon, Speed tells us the duke and the bishop were persuaded to swear friendship in future, the one upon his princehood, and the other upon his priesthood. The duke of Bedford, however, took away the great seal from his uncle. Two years afterwards, the duke returning into France, was accompanied to Calais by the bishop of Winchester, who there received the cardinal's hat sent him by Martin V.

Beaufort's return with increased dignities was by no means acceptable to his late rival who still cherished former animosities, and who anticipated the cardinal's arrival by a proclamation, in the king's name, forbidding the exercise of legantine power within the realm of England, as being incompatible with the "special privilege and custom used and observed from time to time, that a legate from the apostolic see shall enter this land, or any of the king's dominions, without the calling, petition, request, invitation, or desire of the king."<sup>5</sup> In 1427, Cardinal Beaufort was appointed the pope's legate in Germany and general of the crusade then about to be undertaken against the Hussites in Bohemia. Of his success as a military leader, we have conflicting accounts. Polydore Virgil assures us that he put a new face on affairs which looked gloomy on his arrival, and that he returned home after having conducted a most successful campaign; but Aubery declares that he fully participated in the disgrace of the other leaders on the papal side, who were attacked and driven back with great loss by the Hussites; and the account given by the last mentioned author seems to derive confirmation from the fact that he was recalled from Bohemia by the pope, who sent Cardinal Julian in his place with a larger army.

In 1430, the cardinal accompanied King Henry into France, and had the honour to perform the ceremony of crowning the young monarch in the church of Notre Dame at Paris. He was also present with the title of the king's principal counsellor at the conference of Arras, for concluding a peace between the kings of England and France. Meanwhile, the duke of Gloucester, nothing daunted by these obvious

<sup>4</sup> Chron. p. 591.<sup>5</sup> Fox's Acts and Monuments, p. 649.

marks of favour conferred upon his rival, pursued a course of bitter hostility towards the absent prelate, and obtained several orders in council of a nature well calculated to deprive Beaufort of the king's favour. But his better influence prevailed, and, whether consciously guilty or not of the offences laid to his charge, we find him on the 26th of July 1437, obtaining a full pardon under the great seal, for all offences by him committed from the creation of the world up to that date.<sup>6</sup> In 1442, Gloucester, unwearied in his hostility towards the cardinal, exhibited fresh articles of impeachment against him. The king referred the matter to his council; but no decisive steps were taken in consequence, and the prosecution died away.

The rivalry of Beaufort and Gloucester only terminated with their lives, for the bishop survived his rival not above a month. He died on the 14th of June, 1447, and was buried in the cathedral church of Winchester. The greater part of his immense fortune he bequeathed to religious and charitable purposes; and if Harpsfield is to be credited, one of his donations consisted of the enormous sum of £400,000 to the prisons of London!<sup>7</sup> His character was that of a haughty and ambitious but skilful statesman; deeply accomplished in all the mysteries of state intrigue, and little scrupulous in availing himself of every turn of fortune for his own personal aggrandizement. His talents were evidently of a high order; and he always possessed great influence in the lower house of parliament. Various accounts have been given of the secret cause of dislike which from the first existed betwixt Beaufort and Gloucester; perhaps the simplest, which traces their bitter enmity to political rivalry alone, is the most correct. Beaufort has been charged with procuring the murder of his rival; and on this alleged fact Shakspeare has founded the terrific death-bed scene in the second part of his Henry the Sixth.

## Bishop Waynflete.

BORN A. D. 1395 (?).—DIED A. D. 1486.

It is not clear whether Patten or Barbour was the proper family name of this eminent prelate. The appellation of Waynflete was taken from the place of his birth, in Lincolnshire, and was first assumed when he went into orders. "It was a fashion," says Holinshed, "in those days, from a learned spirituall man to take awaie the father's surname (were it never so worshipfull or ancient) and give him for it the name of the towne he was borne in." His father appears to have followed the profession, so highly respectable in those days, of a barber-surgeon. Chandler is indeed anxious to prove that the bishop's father was a gentleman by birth; but we neither sympathise with the anxiety of the learned biographer, nor are we satisfied with his proofs on this point. The exact year of William's birth is not known. It appears from the registers of the see of Lincoln that he was made a sub-deacon in January, 1420, and a priest in 1426. We may conjecture, therefore, that he was born towards the close of the 14th century.

He was educated at Wykeham's school at Winchester, of which he was afterwards appointed master by Beaufort, bishop of Winchester.

His first ecclesiastical preferment was the mastership of St Mary Magdalene's leper-hospital near Winchester, of which the ruins are still visible. From his early connection with this establishment probably arose his attachment to the name, which he afterwards bestowed on his hall and college in Oxford. The ability he displayed in his mastership at Winchester, and the influence of Bekyngton, formerly his school-fellow, and now a rising man at the court of Henry VI., procured for him the mastership, and subsequently the provostship, of the king's new school at Eton. This situation had, in the case of Stambery, the first provost, led to a bishopric, and was destined again to effect a like elevation in Waynflete's favour. On the death of Cardinal Beaufort, in 1447, Waynflete obtained from the king the *congé d'élire* addressed to the chapter of Winchester, and was elected accordingly. Budden, who published a life of Waynflete in Latin, in 1602, drops a hint with respect to this and other preferments, that Waynflete "did not, perhaps, entirely abstain from availing himself of the power of illustrious persons." However this may be, his more recent biographer assures us, that when the ecclesiastical deputation from Winchester waited upon him to announce his election, "from sincere reluctance, or a decent compliance with the fashion of the times, he protested often and with tears, and could not be prevailed on to undertake the important office to which he was called, until they found him about sun-set, in the church of St Mary; when he consented, saying, he would no longer resist the Divine will." Waynflete held the see of Winchester throughout the remainder of his long life.

In 1448 he obtained a royal grant empowering him to found and endow a hall at Oxford, which university was then in a very depressed state. In 1450, when the rebellion of Jack Cade burst forth, Waynflete retired to the nunnery of Holywell; but on being summoned to confer with his sovereign at Canterbury, on the best means of quelling the insurrection, he instantly complied, and advised the issuing of a proclamation offering pardon to all concerned in the rising except Cade himself, in consequence of which the rebels dispersed, leaving their leader to his fate. Soon after this, our prelate, in conjunction with the bishop of Ely, acted as commissioners betwixt the king and Richard, duke of York, when that nobleman took up arms. In October, 1453, Waynflete baptized the young prince of Wales, afterwards Edward IV. In October, 1456, after having been much employed in affairs of state, he was advanced to the dignity of lord-high-chancellor, in the room of Bouchier, archbishop of Canterbury, which office, however, he prudently resigned in July, 1460, before the fatal wreck of his royal master's fortunes in the battle of Northampton. His resignation has been attributed to very unworthy motives, and he has been occasionally represented as trimming, in this and other instances, betwixt the rival parties of York and Lancaster; but Henry himself, in a letter which he wrote to Pope Pius II., while in the custody of the Yorkists, expressly acquits his chancellor of all blame, and bears ample and voluntary testimony to the fidelity and skill with which Waynflete had at all times served him. That Waynflete conducted himself with consummate prudence throughout one of the most difficult and disastrous periods of English history is clear, for he not only retained the confidence of his own Lancastrian party, but commanded the respect of the York-



ists, and even appears to have been in favour with Edward IV., who confirmed the grants made to his college, and added licenses of mortmain.

Bishop Waynflete died of a short but violent illness on the 11th of August, 1486, and was interred with great funeral pomp in Winchester cathedral, in a magnificent sepulchral chapel which had been prepared for the purpose during his own lifetime, and which is kept in the finest preservation by the society of Magdalene college. His will bequeaths "his soul to Almighty God, the Virgin, Mary Magdalene, and the patron-saints of his cathedral;" and, among sundry other arrangements, enjoins on his executors "to cause five thousand masses, in honour of the five wounds of Christ, and the five joys of the Virgin Mary, to be celebrated on the day of his burial, the trental of his obit, and other days, as soon as possible, for his soul, and the souls of his parents and friends." Waynflete was one of the prelates who sat in judgment upon Dr Reginald Pococke, bishop of Chichester, whose religious opinions had given offence to the church. On this occasion, the court was unanimous in condemning Pococke's doctrines, and enjoining him to recant and abjure them; he was also ordered to remain in confinement in his own house, and his writings were directed to be burnt; but in all these proceedings, Mr Lewis affirms, the archbishop Bouchier took a much more active share than Waynflete, though then filling the office of chancellor. Of the bishop's sincere attachment to the Romish church there can be no doubt; but it has been justly remarked, that he did perhaps as much mischief to the popish cause by his zeal in the promotion of learning, as all his other labours did it good. From the college founded and endowed by him at Oxford, not a few powerful abettors of the Reformation were sent forth.

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### III.—LITERARY SERIES.

#### Henry Bracton.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1250.

THIS distinguished lawyer is said, by the most eminent antiquaries, to have been a native of Devonshire, and to have descended from a family of high respectability. The date of his birth is not stated, but he is known to have studied at Oxford, and to have gained considerable reputation there for learning and ability. The law was that branch of knowledge which promised, in the age when he lived, the greatest rewards for diligence and ability, and to that accordingly he devoted himself. It was not, however, from skill in the civil law alone that wealth or distinction was now to be acquired in England, and when

<sup>6</sup> Rymer's *Fœd.* p. 670.    <sup>7</sup> *Hist. Eccles.* p. 643.

he took his degree of doctor, he was eminently versed in the common law, as well as in the more ancient branches of the science. Full of professional erudition, and accomplished in all the learning of the period, he in due time removed to London, where his abilities quickly brought him into general notice, and recommended him to the patronage of Henry the Third. The monarch finding how valuable his services might be rendered in the conduct of the state, used every means to retain him near his person, and for that purpose granted him the use of the earl of Darby's house, till the heirs of that deceased nobleman should occupy it themselves. In the twenty-ninth year of his reign, he still further manifested the respect with which he regarded him, by appointing him to the office of justiciary-itinerant. In this capacity he evinced a prudence and discernment which at length raised him to the eminent station of chief-justice, which he held above twenty years. The most unmingled praise is accorded him for the virtues as well as talent which he exhibited in the exercise of his functions, while occupying this important office. He so tempered, it is said, his justice and authority with equity and integrity, that he was one of the chief pillars of the commonwealth, in which he allowed no one to offend without punishment, and no one to do well without being rewarded.

As an author, he is celebrated for having produced a work of great learning, entitled '*De Consuetudinibus Anglicanis*,' or '*De Consuetudinibus et Legibus Angliæ*.' According to Bishop Nicholson, this production, like that of Lyttleton, was not printed till a considerable period after it had been received in the world as a valuable addition to the stock of legal literature. So numerous, indeed, were the manuscript copies which had been taken, that it was with the utmost difficulty the persons who undertook to edit it for the press could satisfy themselves in preparing the copy. Bishop Nicholson remarks that he must be pardoned his easy admission of the pope's supremacy, and his sometimes naturalizing the canon as well as civil law, when we consider the time wherein he wrote, that it was done after King John had made a formal conveyance of his realm to the see of Rome, and when the greatest part of Europe was entirely under the pope's dominion. The passages that savour strong of the iniquity and vassalage of those unhappy days, are not many; and there is that disagreeable obliquity in them from the description of our true English government, that they are readily discerned to be preternatural and monstrous. Some idea may be formed of the work from these observations of the bishop. They also serve to point out the important use which might be made of such early treatises in the study of English history, and, consequently, the place which Bracton and other writers of a similar kind ought to occupy, even in a literary point of view, among the authors of the country.

The period of Bracton's death is equally uncertain with that of his birth, nor is it known where he was buried, or what became of his family. His work has been frequently appealed to in times of political excitement. Milton, in his celebrated '*Defensio pro populo Anglicanis*,' quotes largely from it, to prove that when the king attempts to govern by his will and not by the law, he ceases to possess authority. A similar use, it is said, was made of the work by Bradshaw, when as president of the high court of justice he addressed the judges of Charles

the First. It is plain, however, from passages in the work expressed in language of equal force, that it was only to the most evident violation of the tenor by which the king reigns, that the opinions alluded to refer. In those places where mention is made of the royal prerogative, he speaks of it in the usual language of the times when he wrote. It may, therefore, be justly inferred that, imperfectly as the theory of government might then be understood by the generality of people, this eminent civilian had formed very correct notions of the true balance which ought to be preserved between the several branches of the legislature.

## Robert of Gloucester.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1260.

THE origin and earliest condition of the language and the poetic literature of England form a subject full of interest and attraction for the antiquarian and the philologist, but do not offer much to engage the attention of the lover of poetry for its own sake. Before the commencement of the 14th century we had a few versifiers, but hardly any poet. The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, who probably flourished about the year 1260, is the first long work in verse which can properly be considered as written in the English dialect, at that time a barbarous and unregulated medley of Saxon and Norman, and hardly in truth fit for the purposes of composition at all. The poem in question is nothing more than a metrical version of the famous Latin history of Geoffrey of Monmouth, which had been previously translated in like manner into Norman-French verse by Wace of Jersey, and into a species of degenerated Saxon by Layamon. There does not appear to be much in any one of these three popular imitations of the fabulous annalist indicative of any thing like poetic inspiration; nor can we speak in greatly more flattering terms of the subsequent production of Robert Mannyng, or De Brunne, a fourth translator from the same favourite original, who is conjectured to have written about the close of the 13th century, and the most remarkable characteristic of whose compositions is merely an apparent ease and fluency of versification, which, however, it is agreeable to remark, were it only as evidencing the somewhat improved state to which the language had even already attained.

Few or no materials exist to throw any light on the personal history of Robert of Gloucester, or on that of many of his contemporaries. Neither Bale nor Pits, those two laborious biographers of the fathers of our literature, make any mention of him. Selden has determined that he lived in the reign of Edward I. Other antiquaries have also discovered that he was a monk of Gloucester, and the learned Thomas Hearne supposes that he was sent to Oxford by the directors of the great abbey of Gloucester, to take care of the youth whom they placed in that university. The same writer says that he seems to have occupied an old house on the west side of the Stockwell-street, and on the site of which was afterwards built Worcester college, originally called Gloucester hall. Much labour has been expended in endeavours to discover the



surname of the monk, and the remarks of Hearne upon the subject show with what care that zealous antiquary exerted himself in elucidating every question relating to his favourite author. The result of his inquiries was, that his name is not to be found in either an ancient or modern hand in the Harleian manuscripts; that it appears only once in the Cottonian collection, and that without the surname; and that no previous antiquary seems to have been acquainted with him, by any other appellation than that of Robert of Gloucester. It is supposed that his surname began to be disused after he attained notice as a writer, and from this circumstance it is inferred that he must have enjoyed, among his cotemporaries, his ordinary share of celebrity. "That his fame was very great," says Hearne, "may appear from hence, that though many Robert of Gloucesters are met with in old registers, yet, as far as we can learn, they were all eclipsed by the historian, the acts of all of them put together being not equal to what he hath done by compiling this work." Of the merits of the chronicler as a poet, Hearne prudently forbears, with all his zeal and veneration, to say much. But his authority is of weight in whatever concerns our ancient literature, and he boldly asserts, that of all books likely to prove useful in the study of the Saxon tongue, none is so valuable as the chronicle of Robert of Gloucester. Declining also, as he does, to compare him with Chaucer, in respect to poetical merit, he claims for him the honour of being the first of English writers. "He, and not Chaucer," says he, "as Dr Fuller and some others would have it, is the genius of the English nation, and he is, on that account, to be as much respected as ever Ennius himself was among the Romans, and I have good reason to think that he will be so by friends to our antiquities and our old history." 'Tis the genius of the age that is to be regarded in such pieces of poetry. The poetry of those times consisted of rhythms both here and in other countries, and the poets thought they had done their parts well, if their rhythms, however mean otherwise, related matter of fact, and were agreeable to truth. Fuller, in the mention he has made of Robert of Gloucester among the other worthies of England, observes in his usual quaint but forcible style, "they speak truly who term him a rhymers, whilst such speak courteously who call him a poet. Indeed, such his language, that he is *dumb* in effect to the readers of this our age, without an interpreter, and such a one will hardly be procured. Antiquaries, among whom Mr Selden, more value him for his history than poetry, his lines being neither strong nor smooth, but sometimes sharp." Camden, however, speaks more favourably of his poetry, and contends, like his editor Hearne, for the merit of his verses on the plea of their being thoroughly English. "Old Robert of Gloucester," says he, "in the time of King Henry the Third, honoured his country with these his best English rimes, which, I doubt not, but some, (although most now are of the new cut,) will give the reading." The lines he quotes will afford as good a sample, perhaps, of his Chronicle, the only work he is known to have written, as could be selected.—

England is a well good land, in the stead best  
 Set in the one end of the world, and reigneth west.  
 The sea goeth him all about, he stint as an yle,  
 Of foes it need the lesse doubt; but it be through gile

Of folke of the self land, as me hath I sey while  
 From south to north it is long, eight hundred mile,  
 And two hundred mile broad from east to west to wend,  
 Amid the land as it might be, and not as in the one end,  
 Plentie men may in England of all good see,  
 But folke it agult, other yeares the worse and worse be.  
 For England is full enough of fruite and of treene,  
 Of woods and of parks that joy it is to seene.

The principal cities are thus briefly characterized:—

In the country of Canterbury, most plenty of fish is,  
 And most chase of wilde beasts about Salisbury Iris.  
 And London ships most, and wine at Winchester.  
 At Hartford sheep and oxen, and fruite at Worcester.  
 Soape about Coventry, and yron at Glocester.  
 Metall, lead, and tinne, in the country of Exeter.  
 Evorwicke of fairest wood, Lincolne of fairest men.  
 Cambridge and Huntington most plenty of deep venne.  
 Elie of fairest place; of fairest sight Rochester.

“Far short,” it is shrewdly observed, “was he that would comprise the excellencies of England in this one verse:”—

*Montes, fontes, pontes, ecclesie, feminae, lana.*

Mountains, fountains, bridges, churches, women and wool.

It was more, however, owing perhaps to the naturally staid temperament of Robert himself, than to the taste of the age, that his poetry exhibited so few marks of vigour or imagination. Between the period when he flourished and that when the verses were written which exhibit so many traces of fancy, there had elapsed about fifty or sixty years. In that time, the people had been gradually acquiring a greater degree of freedom, and consequently of knowledge and refinement. What is still further to the purpose, there were in existence when this dry chronicle of facts was produced, a variety of chivalrous ballads and romances, remarkable for the strangeness of their fictions, and their unlicensed freedom of imagery. That such must have been in circulation at the time, we may fairly believe, when we consider the state of manners and the events which were then engrossing the thoughts of almost every individual in the kingdom. The crusades had just filled the world with the spirit of enthusiasm and adventure. Consequent on this were a train of new and more strongly excited sympathies than had ever before agitated the minds of men in general. Devotion led some, the love of novelty others, to undertake the perilous enterprise; but whatever was the motive which sent them to the plains of Syria, their course was contemplated by those they left behind with an intense and breathless emotion. Hence poetry would naturally strain every nerve to depict the virtues of the soldiers of the cross: would rejoice in relating their varied fortunes, in proving how well they deserved the applause or the tears which every heart was ready to bestow. But of the poetry which celebrated the grandeur of chivalry and the worth of its professors, few examples remain, few at least that can be ascribed to the age of which we are speaking. When we consider, says Warton, “the feudal manners, and the magnificence of our Norman ancestors, their love of military glory, and the enthusiasm with which they engaged in the crusades, and the wonders to which they must have been familiarized

from those eastern enterprises, we naturally suppose, what will hereafter be more particularly proved, that their retinues abounded with minstrels and harpers, and that their chief entertainment was to listen to the recital of romantic and martial adventures." "But," continues the historian, "I have been much disappointed in my searches after the metrical tales which must have prevailed in their times. Most of those old heroic songs have perished, together with the stately castles in whose halls they were sung." We cannot, therefore, tell from an examination of the originals, what was the precise character of the old songs of English chivalry, but the substance of them, it is supposed, was wrought into the metrical romances of which so many specimens still remain, and most of which are strikingly opposed in character to the work of Robert of Gloucester. It is evident, therefore, that there were now in vogue two very distinct species of poetry, and it is not improbable, but that it was owing to this circumstance that the poetry of the next age possessed such high and genuine merit. The unambitious chroniclers, who so readily sacrificed every sparkling of fancy to the plain narrative of facts,—who were only desirous of being historians in rhyme, because in that form they would be more generally read, and the facts they related better remembered,—the writers of this class did, there is little doubt, important service to the poetical literature of the country, by teaching the people to regard verse as a fit medium for regular and sustained narrative, and thereby to look for those species of poetry in which fiction is imitative of reality, and the likenesses unbroken by any thing heterogeneous in the medium through which we see them.

The obscurity which attends the personal fortunes and character of Robert of Gloucester pertains to most of the names which occur in the literary history of this period. There is not even a traditional lustre to attract the attention of the antiquarian to their fates. But it is in this as in other cases: the want of biographical materials is in great measure compensated for by the historical interest attached to the compositions of these obscure writers, and it is to that consequently, even the student of biography, when he passes a certain line in the annals of either this or any other nation, will chiefly direct his thoughts.

## Robert Mannyng.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1270.

THIS writer, like Robert of Gloucester, with whom he was cotemporary, was a monk, and belonged to the monastery of Brunne, or Bourne, near Depyng in Lincolnshire, of which he was a Gilbertine canon. A passage occurs in one of his poems, in which he alludes to his early education, and, according to the interpretation of Mr Ellis, it may be decided therefrom, that he was a native of Malton, and flourished as late as the reign of Edward the Third. The lines are:—

In the Third Edward's time was I,  
When I wrote all this storey.  
In the house of Sixille I was a throwe,  
Dan Robert of Malton that ye know,



Did it write for fellows' sake,  
When thai willed solace make.

He appears to have occupied a somewhat conspicuous station among the writers of his age, and Hearne observes, that it is probable he assumed the appellation of De Brunne, choosing to let his proper surname fall into forgetfulness, in imitation of Robert of Gloucester. It was not, however, only in this respect that he followed the example of that author. His principal work is a metrical history, or chronicle of England. But, according to the testimony of the most ingenious antiquaries, the former part of this poem is a mere translation of a French romance, entitled '*Roman de Rois d'Angleterre*,' 'or Brut d'Angleterre;' and it is a circumstance not unworthy of attention, that the version is made in the exact measure of the original. The prologue also is in perfect accordance with the style of similar addresses, as they are found in the Orlando Innamorato of Boiardo, and other Italian romantic poets.—

Lordynges that be now here,  
If ye wille listene and lere,  
All the story of Englande,  
Als Robert Mannyng wryten it fand,  
And on Inglysh has it schewed,  
Not for the lered but for the lewed;  
For tho that on this lond wonn  
That the Latin ne Franky's conn,  
For to half solace and gamen  
In felauschip when tha sitt samen,  
And it is wisdom forto wyten  
The state of the land, and hef it wrytten,  
What manere of folk first it wan,  
And of what kind it first began.

The Chronicler then proceeds to relate, with great seriousness, all the events which happened in this country from the time of '*Sir Noe*,' unto Eneas; from Eneas unto Brutus; and from Brutus to Cadweldres. In doing which, he professes to show in respect to these kings—

Whilk were foles, and whilk were wyse,  
And whilk of them couth most quantyse;  
And whilk did wrong, and whilk ryght,  
And whilk mayntaned pes and fyght.

On completing that portion of the poem of which the divisions are thus laid down, the author leaves the Brut d'Angleterre, and draws his materials from another French work, which, it is remarkable enough, had been written a few years before by a canon of the monastery of Bridlington in Yorkshire. The name of this author was Peter Langtoft, and his chronicle, which consists of five books, is written in Alexandrines, a measure which was long one of the most admired species of verse both in France and England. Robert de Brunne, who was a most faithful translator, imitated his style as closely as he did that of Wace, the author of the Brut d'Angleterre, and the second part of his poem accordingly is in Alexandrines. Warton, has observed that he had little more poetry in him than Robert of Gloucester; but has added, as some apology for him, that he has acquainted his readers that he avoided high description and the usual phraseology of the minstrels

and harpers of his time. His lines on the subject give a good idea of the state of the language at the period :—

I mad noght for no disours,  
Ne for seggers no harpours,  
Bot for the luf of symple men,  
That strange Inglis cannot ken.  
For many it ere that strange Inglis  
In ryme wate never what it is,  
I made it not for to be praysed,  
Bot at the lewed men were aysed.

But Robert de Brunne did not confine his labours to these historical subjects: he also translated the treatise written in French by the celebrated Grossthead, bishop of Lincoln, entitled ‘Manuel de Peche,’ or ‘Manuel of Sins;’ a work which throws some singular light on the religious notions of the age and on the modes in which they were disseminated. Robert himself tells us that he translated it to furnish men with amusement, “for gamys and festys at the ale,” when they love to listen to tales and rhymes. The most serious moral injunctions are, therefore, accompanied in this work, with numerous romantic legends, and Bishop Grossthead himself is represented as having his harper lodged in a chamber next his own, as employing his skill by night and day, and answering a person who inquired ‘Why he held the harper so dear?’ that,—

The vertu of the harpe, thurgh skyle and ryght,  
Wyll destrye the fendys myght;  
And to the cros by gode skylle  
Ys the harpe lykened weyl.

The other work of Robert de Brunne was a translation of the treatise of Cardinal Bonaventura, the title of which, in the version of our author, is ‘Medytaciuns of the Soper of our Lorde Jhesu, and also of hys Passyun, and eke of the Peynes of hys swete Modyr mayden Marye, the whyche made yn Latyn Bonaventure Cardynall.’

Warton’s opinion that Robert was nothing more than a translator, has been controverted by the learned editor of the History of English Poetry, who observes that he generally enlarges the moral precepts of the original, introduces occasional illustrations of his own, and sometimes avails himself of other authorities than those employed by this writer whom he chiefly follows. The same remark may also be made in respect to this writer, which was made in the notice of Robert of Gloucester. Notwithstanding his want of fancy, he was instrumental in improving the poetical literature of the country, by introducing a more regular species of metrical narrative than has hitherto been known; to which may be added, that he deserves very high praise for having discernment enough to adapt his productions to that class of persons whom it was most beneficial and necessary to inspire with a taste for literature.

Adam Davie, who is commonly mentioned as the next of our poets, appears to have been nearly contemporary with De Brunne, and may perhaps be considered as rather his superior both in elegance and spirit. Laurence Minot, whose works had been entirely forgotten till they were accidentally discovered by the late Mr Tyrerwhitt, while

collecting materials for his admirable edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, wrote about half a century afterwards a series of poems on the principal events of the reign of Edward III., which have been very vehemently lauded by the learned but eccentric Mr Ritson, to whom the world is indebted for their first appearance from the press. He writes with very considerable vigour and animation, and has upon the whole a good deal more about him of the true poet than any of his predecessors.

## John Duns Scotus.

BORN A. D. 1266.—DIED A. D. 1308.

THIS famous scholastic doctor was born towards the close of the thirteenth century, in the north of England, or, as some are of opinion, in Scotland. At this time, the Aristotelian logic enjoyed very great popularity and authority. It was also the age in which the several recently established orders of mendicant friars were in the very height of their reputation. These were four in number, the Dominicans, or Black friars, called also Friars preachers; the Carmelites or White friars; the Augustins, or Grey friars, as they were called, from the colour of their principal robe; and the Franciscans, also called Grey friars, for the same reasons, or Cordeliers, in allusion to the cord which they wore as a belt, or Minorites, that is inferiors, a title they were fond of giving themselves, in affectation of extreme humility. Of the four orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans were by far the most celebrated. The different associations of mendicant friars took their rise about the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the establishments of the regular monks, in consequence of the large revenues of which they had become possessed, having generally fallen into a state of extreme disorder, dissoluteness, and inefficiency, the church felt the necessity of endeavouring to keep alive the attachment of the people, by means of a new description of religious labourers, constituted upon principles which would insure in them at least an extraordinary activity, and all that show of zeal, by which the popular applause is most apt to be gained. The mendicant orders were accordingly established, and the experiment was attended with even more than the expected success. The new ascetics neglected nothing by which they might draw to themselves the favour and reverence of the multitude; and among the means to which they resorted for this purpose, none produced a more remarkable effect than the ardour with which they devoted themselves to literature, and the celebrity which, in consequence, they speedily acquired, for their skill in the frivolous pursuits then known by the name of learning. They had begun, in particular, even before the time of Duns Scotus, to apply themselves with great eagerness to the study of that disputatious philosophy which had been raised on the basis of the logical and metaphysical writings of Aristotle; and an active rivalry had already arisen, in regard to their respective pretensions in this department of erudition, between the Franciscans and the Dominicans,—the former counting among their number the seraphic Doctor Bonaventura, and the irrefragable Alexander Hales,—while the latter boasted



of their Albert the great, and the angelical St Thomas Aquinas ; these strange epithets being titles which had been solemnly conferred, in some cases by the universities, along with their degrees, upon the individuals in question. It was destined for Duns, however, to become eventually the greatest glory of the Franciscans, among whom he was first introduced, if we may believe the story that is told by two brethren of the order, who found him tending his father's cows, and were so much struck with his intelligence, that they requested his father to allow them to take him along with them to their monastery in the neighbourhood, that so promising a genius might be duly reared up to the service of the church. The proof, indeed, which the legend informs us he gave of his capacity, was no mean one ; for the good friars, it seems, finding the boy quite destitute of religious knowledge, and having thereupon resolved to attempt teaching him the Lord's Prayer, were confounded by his repeating the whole to them, without a blunder, after only once hearing it. We are not sure, however, that this anecdote is quite reconcileable with another still more marvellous, which is also told respecting the youth of this great doctor : namely, that he was originally very stupid and slow of apprehension, a circumstance which gave him great distress, till, having one day taken it into his head to address himself very earnestly in prayer, upon the subject, to the Virgin Mary, she condescended to appear, and enter into conversation with him, promising that she would wonderfully illuminate his understanding, if he would only engage to devote his powers to her service ; upon consenting to which condition, he found himself accordingly endowed, on the instant, with the rare talents of which his future career gave such splendid proof.<sup>1</sup> Such of the biographers of Scotus as are for our believing both of these stories, hold that the adventure of the interview with the Virgin must have happened previously to that with the friars ; while those who are willing to give up one of them, to save the credit of the other, pass over in silence the proof young Duns is said to have afforded of his extraordinary memory ; the anecdote of his obligations to, and compact with, the Virgin, being one they will by no means part with. Indeed this notion of his having enjoyed the peculiar favour of Mary colours nearly the whole narrative of his life, as commonly told. After remaining for some time in the Franciscan monastery—the locality of which, we may remark, by the by, is not very clearly settled, it being doubtful whether it was in England, Scotland, or Ireland—he was removed to the university of Oxford. Here he soon distinguished himself by his ardour and proficiency in all the studies of the place, but particularly by so unrivalled a skill in logical and metaphysical quibbling, that he gained for himself the name of the Sophist, and was by many, we are told, already esteemed a greater philosopher than Aristotle himself. After a time he commenced the public teaching of his favourite sciences, and speedily attained such extraordinary celebrity, that pupils absolutely flocked to him in mobs. We are assured by various authorities, that his lectures used to be attended by thirty thousand auditors ! But in regard to this matter, there is probably a great deal of truth in Anthony Wood's explanation, who tells us, that of this immense multitude many were merely “ varlets, who, pretending to be scholars,

<sup>1</sup> An anecdote very similar to this, we may just remark, is also told of Albertus Magnus, who flourished a short time before Duns Scotus.

shuffled themselves in, and did act much villany in the university, by thieving," and other irregularities which he names; adding, "they lived under no discipline, neither had any tutors, but only for fashion's sake, would sometimes thrust themselves into the schools at ordinary lectures, and, when they went to perform any mischief, then would be accounted scholars, that so they might free themselves from the jurisdiction of the burghers." The number of students at this time at the university of Bologna, is stated to have been ten thousand; and, in 1453, a contemporary writer relates that there were twenty-five thousand at that of Paris.

The most memorable event in the life of Duns, took place on occasion of a visit he made to Paris, during the period of his residence at Oxford. Remembering, we may suppose, his promise to the Virgin, in whose honour he had already written doughtily and largely, he determined to make his appearance in the French capital, to defend against all opposers the celebrated article of faith touching her alleged freedom from original sin, of which he has sometimes even been accounted the first deviser and promulgator. A day having been accordingly appointed, for a public disputation on the subject, before the university, Duns presented himself; and never was known any thing more admirable than the skill with which he encountered alone a host of opponents, or more splendid than his triumph. He allowed the adverse party, in the first place, to state their case without interruption; and it may give the reader some idea of the fertility of the scholastic logic, when he is informed that, upon this occasion, the single point which had to be made out was supported, on the part of these ingenious reasoners, by just two hundred arguments! At last, when they had confessed themselves, as well they might, after such an expenditure, fairly exhausted, the redoubtable Duns, nothing dismayed, rose in his turn; and, wonderful as it may seem, is said to have actually gone over, without ever hesitating for a moment, the whole two hundred arguments, in the order in which they had been stated, and, when he had completely demolished them, one after another, to have concluded with such a cloud of altogether irrefutable ones, in favour of his own side of the question, that all present were converted to his opinion, and he was unanimously declared to have placed the matter for ever beyond the reach of controversy. He is described by an eye-witness, Pelbartus a Temeswar, to have, on this occasion, "snapped the knottiest syllogisms, as Sampson did the bonds of Delilah." He was immediately graduated by the title of 'the subtle doctor;' and an order of the university was passed, that no one should in future be admitted to any degree whatever, without previously swearing to defend the doctrine which had thus been so triumphantly established. Such, at least, is the story told by the different writers, who, in more recent times, have attempted to collect the particulars of the life of Scotus. But it is not a little curious that in the subtle doctor's own commentary on the Sentences of Peter the Lombard, we find him delivering his opinion upon the subject in question, in terms very different from what this statement would lead us to expect. Instead of any decisive assertion of the doctrine which he has the credit of having so victoriously vindicated, his language here is that of ignorance and doubt. "The probability," he says, "is rather in favour of the Virgin having been conceived *without* original sin, but the

author determines nothing : ” “ *Conclusio est negativa, si placet, nihil enim determinat auctor.* ” (p. 262). What makes Duns’s hesitation on this occasion the more remarkable is, that it is, as far as we have observed, the only instance in which he has the modesty to confess himself in doubt throughout the volume. The learned Luke Wadding, a Spanish Franciscan, but an Irishman by birth, who writes a life of Duns Scotus, tells us, with all imaginable gravity, that, as Duns was proceeding along one of the streets of Paris, on his way to this famous disputation, he came up to a certain image of the Virgin, and kneeling down before it, begged for aid and support from his celestial patroness, in the combat he was about to wage in her cause, upon which the image actually answered him by nodding its head. A fact, adds the historian, which it is impossible to doubt, since any one who will take the trouble of going to Paris, may behold the image with its head still inclined, in perpetual commemoration and testimony of the miracle ! One wonders to read such a passage as this, in a work written about the middle of the seventeenth century ; but the same tale is repeated, with equal gravity, even by subsequent writers.<sup>2</sup>

Wadding, by-the-by, labours hard to prove Scotus to have been an Irishman,—a theory which his common designation by no means refutes, since the name of Scotland was at one time given to Ireland, as well as to the northern part of Britain. He acknowledges, however, that the matter is by no means perfectly clear, quaintly remarking, that “ the subtlety of Duns may be said to have commenced even before his birth, since no one has yet been able to track him to his first appearance in our world.” An old English translator of one of his smaller works,<sup>3</sup> who contends strenuously that he was born south of the Tweed, advances a theory of his own in explanation of the epithet Scotus, or Scot, which he maintains is merely a corruption of the word *Cot*, the name being originally and properly Duns-cot, after some village so called in Northumberland. This writer dedicates his work to a Mr Dunce, a north-county squire, whom he affirms to be of the same family that produced the subtle doctor. We do not know whether any remnant of the race is still to be found in those parts. While upon this subject, too, we may mention that Duns Scotus is supposed by many to have the honour of being the true parent of the common English *dunce*, the synonyme of dolt or blockhead, the term having been applied to his followers, the Scotists, as an epithet of opprobrium, by their opponents, the Thomists, or disciples of St Thomas Aquinas. Some time after this disputation, Duns took a final leave of Oxford, and settled at Paris, continuing his duties as a professor in the university there, and teaching with undiminished applause. When he had resided, however, in that city only about a year, as he was one day walking, attended by several of his pupils, in a field in the neighbourhood, a letter was put into his hands from the general or principal of the religious order to which he belonged, commanding his presence immediately at Cologne. Without even returning to the city to collect his books, or bid adieu to his friends, he set out on his journey on the instant. It was in his usual mendicant attire, barefooted, and in rags, and with that cord about his waist which, as one of the poets of the

<sup>2</sup> See Life by Colganus, Antwerp, 1655.

<sup>3</sup> Idiota’s, or Duns’s Contemplations of Divine Love. Paris, 1602.



day expresses it, was his kingly crown, that this extraordinary genius approached the gates of Cologne, where he was met by a solemn procession of the clergy and the magistrates, attended by an immense concourse of people of all degrees, and, being placed in a triumphal chariot, was welcomed to the city, even, says one of his historians, as Plato of old was welcomed to Syracuse by his royal friend Dionysius. At Cologne, as formerly at Oxford and Paris, pupils crowded around him from all parts; but his brilliant career was now rapidly drawing to a close. One day after he had been exerting himself in teaching, he was suddenly struck with apoplexy, which proved fatal in the course of a few hours; and thus perished, in his forty-second, or, as other accounts say, in his thirty-fourth year, the man who had, even at that early period of life, already attained to be universally reputed, both for genius, learning, and piety, the wonder and chief glory of his age. Wadding has published an edition of the works of Duns Scotus, which extends to twelve thick volumes in folio—an amazing mass of literary labour to have been accomplished in so short a life. His admirers extol his genius as of unrivalled acuteness; and there can be no question that, both for talent and erudition, he was one of the most remarkable of that very remarkable class of men to which he belongs. He lived during the very height and fury of the scholastic mania; and his works, accordingly, present a picture of the disputatious temper of the philosophy which he cultivated in all its extravagance. But still there is the inspiration of an active and penetrating intellect in many of his conceptions, which shows what he might have performed, had he been born in a more fortunate age. As it was, not only his contemporaries, but many succeeding generations, looked upon him as one of the greatest men that had ever appeared. Many of his followers, in the church especially, although he was never canonized, regarded his memory with the veneration usually paid to that of a saint; and Baptista Mantuanus, in one of his epigrams, goes so far as to say of him, that, for his services to the faith, both religion and God himself are debtors to Scotus. A complete copy of the twelve volumes of his works, published by Wadding, is an extremely rare collection.

## William Occam.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1280.—DIED A. D. 1350.

THE most distinguished of the disciples of Scotus was William Occam, born at Ockham in Surrey about the year 1280.<sup>1</sup> While yet a youth he entered into the order of St Francis, and prosecuted his studies with great vigour and success, first at Oxford, and afterwards at Paris. In both these universities, he enjoyed the opportunity of hearing the scholastic prelections of Scotus, many of whose opinions he retained through life, and amongst others, the position which makes the distinction of right from wrong depend on the will of the supreme Being. But he by no means reposed implicit faith in all the doctrines of his illustrious master. On the contrary, he expressly avowed his determination to reject

<sup>1</sup> Bruckeri Hist. Phil. iii. 846.

human authority, even that of his master, whenever any doctrine appeared to him repugnant to reason: "I do not support this opinion," says he, "because he lays it down, but because I think it true, and therefore, if he has elsewhere maintained the opposite, I care not." This language, it has been justly observed, "now so trivial that no slave can disclaim it, and every schoolboy would think it too commonplace to be repeated, was, in the fourteenth century, far more important than the most brilliant discoveries, and contained the germ of all reformation in philosophy and religion. Luther and Bacon were actuated by no other principle in the deliverance of the human understanding."

The principal question upon which Occam opposed his master Scotus, was that concerning universals as they were called. He held that the words which are called universal, are to be considered as signs which equally indicate any one out of many particular objects. "This opinion," says one of the most accomplished metaphysicians of the present age in his review of Stewart's Introduction to the Encyclopædia, "was revived by Hobbes, Berkeley, Hume, Hartley, and Condillac; abused with great ingenuity by Horne Tooke; and followed by Mr Stewart, who has on this occasion made common cause with philosophers in whose ranks he is not usually found. Few metaphysical speculations have been represented as more important by its supporters and opponents. Perhaps, however, when the terms are explained, and when the darkness is dissipated with which controversy never fails to cloud a long contested question, it may appear that this subject has not yet been examined on true principles. But whatever may be the future fate of the controversy, it cannot be denied, that the reasonings in defence of Nominalism are stated with singular ingenuity, and even perspicuity, in the passages of Occam which now lie before us. Among many other observations, perfectly unlike his age, we find him limiting the philosophy of the human mind to what can be known by experience of its operations, and utterly excluding all questions relating to the nature of the thinking principle. 'We are conscious that we understand and will; but whether these acts be performed by an immaterial and incorruptible principle, is a matter of which we are not conscious, and which is no farther the subject of demonstration than it can be known by experience. All attempts to prove it must be founded on the assumption of something doubtful.' But the most remarkable of all the reasonings of this original thinker, are those which he employs against the then received doctrine 'of sensible and intelligible species' (or *appearances*) of things which are the immediate objects of the mind when we perceive or think. These images or likenesses of objects alone, were supposed to be contemplated by the senses and the understanding, and to be necessary to perception and mental apprehension. Biel, a follower of Occam, in expounding the doctrine of his master, tells us, that 'a species was the similitude or image of a thing known, naturally remaining in the mind after it ceases to be the object of actual knowledge; or otherwise, that likeness of a thing, which is a previous condition of knowledge, which excites knowledge in the understanding, and which may remain in the mind in the absence of the thing represented.'<sup>2</sup> The supposed necessity of such *species*, moving from the

<sup>2</sup> Gabriel Biel, ii. Sent. in Tenn.

object to the organ of sense, is, according to Occam, founded on the assumed principle, that what moves must be in contact with what is moved. But this principle he asserts to be false; and he thinks it sufficiently disproved by the fact, that the loadstone attracts iron to it without touching it. He thought nothing necessary to sensation but the power of sensation, and the thing which is its object. All intermediate beings he regarded as arbitrary figments. We cannot pursue these quotations farther. It is easy to conceive his application of a similar mode of reasoning to 'the *intelligible species*,' which, indeed, he who denied abstract ideas, had already virtually rejected. It is plain, indeed, that Occam denied both parts of this opinion; not only that which is called Aristotelian, concerning the *species* supposed to move from outward objects to the organs of sense; but also that which, under the name of the Ideal theory, has been imputed by Dr Reid and Mr Stewart to Descartes, and all succeeding philosophers, who are considered as teaching the actual *resemblance* of our thoughts to external things, and thereby laying their philosophy open to the inferences afterwards made from it by Berkeley about the origin of our perceptions, and by Hume against the possibility of knowledge. The philosophical reader will be struck with the connexion between this rejection of 'images or likenesses of things' as necessary to perception; and the principle, that we know nothing of mind but its actions; and cannot fail, in a system of reasoning of which these are specimens, illustrated by an observation of the less observed appearances of outward nature, and animated by a disregard of authority in the search for truth, to perceive tendencies towards an independent philosophy, to be one day built by reason upon a wide foundation of experience."

Occam took a conspicuous part in those violent disputes which agitated the church during the pontificate of John XXII. from 1316 to 1334. He opposed the ambitious pretensions of the pope, and defended generally the rights of the civil magistrate against the usurped prerogatives of the church, with great spirit and success. In 1322, he was chosen provincial of the Franciscans in England, and afterwards definitor of the whole order of St Francis, in which latter capacity he was present at the general chapter held at Perusium in Tuscany, where he boldly defended the principles of the 'spiritual brethren,' as they were called, which the pope had condemned as heretical by two solemn decrees.<sup>3</sup> He also impugned with much vehemence a favourite opinion of John XXII. that the souls of good men are not admitted to the beatific vision and full happiness of heaven until after the resurrection. For such contumacious conduct, the holy father cited him to Rome, but instead of obeying the summons, Occam took shelter at the court of Lewis of Bavaria, who had himself been deposed and excommunicated by the pope, and who received his fellow in misfortune in a very gracious manner. In this retirement Occam composed several of his works, particularly his compendium of the heresies of Pope John, of which he enumerated no fewer than seventy-seven.<sup>4</sup> He also published several treatises in defence of his patron, and against that maxim of the papal court, first promulgated by Boniface VIII. in 1301, that "all emperors, kings, and princes, are subject to the supreme authority of the pope,

<sup>3</sup> Dupin, cent. xiv.<sup>4</sup> Tanner, p. 555.



and that in temporals as well as spirituals." His works against the papal authority are represented by Selden as "the best that had been written in former ages on the ecclesiastical power."

During the life of the emperor, Occam defied the rage of three successive pontiffs; but on the death of Lewis in 1347, he no longer found himself in a capacity to brave the papal thunders, and was constrained to make his peace with the church by many humiliating concessions. By the interest of the Franciscans, he obtained absolution for all past offences from Clement VI.; but he did not long survive his abjuration of those opinions which it had been the great object of his life to establish and promulgate. He died at Capua in Italy, on the 20th of September 1350. His writings are voluminous but scarce. An account of them is given in Tenneman's 'History of Philosophy,' vol. viii. part 2. published at Leipsic in 1811.

## Walter Burleigh,

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1320.

AMONG the men of extraordinary ability who flourished in the age when the passion for scholastic learning was at its height, Burleigh holds a conspicuous station. Little is known of his early life, or of the methods he pursued in attaining that high rank to which he rose in the learned world. It appears to have been one of the peculiarities of the period, that only men of a certain turn or habit of mind had a chance of making their way to eminence. The rigid forms of study and reasoning to which intellects of every degree of strength, and every character, were subjected, tended to destroy all those tenderer germs of original thought, which though not essential perhaps to the existence of truth, give so much grace and beauty to the whole intellectual world. Few things are better adapted to prove the power of individual peculiarities over external force than the variety of styles which may be seen in the writings of the most devoted disciples of Aristotle: but it was only men of the hardest minds that could endure the discipline they had to undergo; the rest shrunk, withered into useless weeds, and even those who lived through the process, appeared possessed rather of a strong rigidity, than a genial, living strength. Burleigh was one of the few who succeeded in retaining somewhat of his natural character, and enjoyed among his cotemporaries the singular honour of being named 'the perspicuous doctor'. He studied first at Oxford, and then at Paris, where he was a fellow-pupil with Occam in the school of Duns Scotus. On his return to England, he became a most determined opponent of the system of his master, and acquired a reputation for acuteness and learning, which recommended him to the notice of Edward the Third, of whom he was for some time the preceptor. There were few branches of literature or science on which his fruitful mind had not been employed. Logic and metaphysics, in which he chiefly excelled, did not prevent his becoming noted for his skill in natural philosophy, on the one hand, and his profound acquaintance with theology on the other. His works consequently embrace a vast variety of subjects; but his princi-

pal productions are in the form of commentaries on the metaphysical and ethical works of Aristotle. The list of these treatises affords a remarkable evidence of the laborious attention with which the scholars of this age pursued their painful and abstruse labours; but it shows at the same time how far removed the literature of the schools was from the path of practical utility, and how impossible it would have been for its greatest admirer to have said of its most accomplished professor, that he brought philosophy from its higher sphere to converse with mortals. Only one of Burleigh's works has escaped almost utter oblivion: this is a tract entitled, 'De Vita et Moribus Philosophorum,' and it is not unworthy of preservation, as giving a curious specimen of the manner in which the masters of ancient wisdom were viewed by the learned of the 14th century.

## John of Gaddesden.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1320.

THE earliest English physician whose works have been printed, was Gilbert English, who flourished in the 13th century, and whose skill in medicine is highly extolled by Leland and Bale. Like his predecessor, Albricius, he appears to have mastered the science of the Arabians, and Dr Freind is of opinion, that "he took the bulk of what he compiled from the writings of the Arabians," which were, in fact, at this time, the only depositaries of science known to Europeans. John de Gaddesden is the next medical writer of this country whose works are before the public. He flourished in the early part of the 14th century, and studied at Merton college, Oxford. "Having acquired," says Leland, "a thorough knowledge of philosophy, he applied with great ardour to the study of medicine, in which he made so great proficiency, that he was justly esteemed the great luminary of his age. He wrote a large and erudite work on medicine, to which, on account of its excellence, the illustrious title of 'The Medical Rose,' was given." The title of the book is somewhat different from Leland's account of it. It runs thus in the original: 'Rosa Anglica quatuor libris distincta, de morbis particularibus, de febribus, de chirurgia, de pharimocopeia.' It is a singular work, and may be referred to as exhibiting the whole system of surgery and physic practised in England in the 14th century. In treating of each disease, Gaddesden gives, first, the etymology of its name, and a general description of it; 2dly, the symptoms; 3dly, the treatment. On the latter head, Gaddesden is always extremely full; in fact, as Dr Freind observes, he seems to have sedulously collected all the receipts and nostrums which he had ever met with or heard of, and, with little attention to the rationale of medicine, to have incorporated the whole in one vast system of therapeutics. He was a great dealer in secrets, and possessed some with which, if we are to trust his own account, he performed absolute miracles; he affirms that he possessed great skill in physiognomy, and informs us, that it was his intention to write a treatise of chiromancy. In fact, Gaddesden was the universal philosopher of his day: physic, meta-

physics, surgery, poetry, philology,—nothing came amiss to him; and when one art failed, he was always sure to have another at hand with which he could at least impose on the credulity of mankind. Dr Freind has exposed, with much humour and effect, the extreme empiricism of Gaddesden's practice. What can be more whimsical, for example, than the following treatment of a patient in the small-pox? "After this"—that is, immediately after the eruption appears—"cause the whole body of your patient be wrapped in red scarlet cloth, or in any other red cloth, and cause every thing about his bed be made red. This is an admirable mode of cure. It was in this manner I treated the son of the noble king of England when he had the small-pox; and I cured him without leaving any marks." Nothing less ridiculous is his treatment of epilepsy, though in this instance, at least, he was not singular in his practice: "Because," says he, "there are many children and others affected with the epilepsy, who cannot take medicines, let the following method be observed, which is recommended by Constantine, Walter, Bernard, Gilbert, and others, which I too have found to be effectual, whether the patient was a demoniac, a lunatic, or an epileptic. When the patient and his parents have fasted three days, let him be conducted to a church. There, if he be of proper age, and in his right senses, let him confess. Then let him hear mass on Friday, during the fast of Quatuor temporum, and also on Saturday. On Sunday, let a good and pious priest read over his head, in the church, the gospel which is appointed to be read in September in the time of vintage, and let the patient wear the same about his neck, and he will be cured. The gospel is: 'This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.'" Such were the methods of cure practised by a man who stood at the head of the medical school of England in the 14th century, whom princes consulted and honoured, whom poets celebrated, and whom Leland and Ovaringius extol as the profoundest philosopher, the most skilful physician, and the most illustrious man of his age! In forming an estimate, however, of Gaddesden, or any of his contemporaries, we must take into account the general ignorance and universal superstition of the age in which they lived. Besides the practice of his profession, Gaddesden held a prebendary in St Paul's,—a sinecure place doubtless, for so convenient a mode of rewarding personal services was not unknown to the dispensers of patronage even in these incorrupt times. Of his '*Rosa Anglica*,' there are two editions: one printed in folio at Venice, in 1502,—the other in quarto, Aug. Vind. 1595.

## *Sir John Mandeville.*

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1300.—DIED A. D. 1372.

THE fervour of religious enthusiasm which had carried crowds of humble pilgrims and steel-clad warriors to the Holy Land, was not yet exhausted when this remarkable man began his career. But the motives which influenced him seem to have been altogether distinct from those which had hitherto operated on the minds of travellers to the



remote East. A desire of information, and that restlessness of mind with which it is so frequently blended, prompted him to pursue a course which it had till now required the irresistible inducements of devotion to undertake with courage. He may, therefore, perhaps be fairly regarded as the first of our countrymen to whom the name of traveller ought strictly to be applied; and when either the extent of his wanderings are remembered, or the few facilities which the age afforded for pursuing them in safety, he may be considered, with equal justice, as one of the most enterprising of his class.

It has not been ascertained in what year he was born, but there are documents to prove that it was at or very near the commencement of the fourteenth century, and that Saint Albans was his birth place. The family from which he descended is represented as having been of the highest respectability; the same scanty traditions relating to him acquaint us that he was brought up as a physician, and that he exercised his profession for some years, but was at length so strongly excited by the desire of seeing distant countries, that in 1332 he bade farewell to his native land, and commenced a tour which, with his stay in the different regions that attracted his curiosity, occupied no less a period than thirty-four years. During this time, he traversed the chief parts of Asia, Egypt, and Libya, spent three years at Pekin in China, attended the grand khan of Cathay in his wars, and even served as a soldier himself under the sultan of Egypt. The variety of adventures with which he must have met in such a journey would have been amply sufficient to satisfy his readers, and it is only to be regretted that the interesting and valuable information he might have conveyed should have been sacrificed to the extravagancies which disfigure his journal. From the length of time he expended in his wanderings, from the close intercourse which he seems to have kept up with the natives of the countries he explored, and the skill he acquired in their languages, he was qualified to enlarge the knowledge of his countrymen on subjects of the most important practical utility. But either his mind was deficient in acuteness, or he was unwilling to diminish the amazement with which the common stories respecting the east were received by the people. Thus the most extravagant assertions are made with an appearance of faith which is almost as startling as the wonders themselves. Nature is represented under aspects which set at defiance all the laws by which it may reasonably be supposed she is every where governed. Circumstances occur which the sober earnestness of the narrative sets forth as worthy of all credit, but which are scarcely more credible than those of the wildest romance. The journal, therefore, of Sir John would be worthy of little attention were it not for the light which it throws upon the taste of the English at the time when it was written. In the preface to the work, he speaks with some eloquence on the claims which the land of Palestine has to the devout attention of Christian men and states as his motive for describing it, that a long time had passed since the route thither was familiar or general, and that a number of persons desired to hear it described. He then formally declares, "I, John Mandeville, knight, who was born in England in the town of St Albans, passed the sea in the year 1332, on Saint Michael's day; and there remained a long time, and went through many lands and many provinces, kingdoms,

and isles, and have passed through Turkie, and through Armony the Little and Great, through Tartary, Jury, Araby, Egypt the High and Low, through Liby, Chalde, and a great part of Æthiope, through Amazony, through Jude the Less and the More, and through many other isles which are about Jude, where many people dwell of divers shape. Of the men of which lands I shall speak plainly, and shall declare part of the things I have seen." He then proceeds to describe the way to Jerusalem, "on horse, on foot, or by sea," prefacing his account with the remark, that he had "ridden it and passed it with good observation." Many of the principal towns on the road are mentioned in order, and the care is every where evident which the author took not to omit any legend which might please the lovers of the marvellous. The description given of Bethlehem may serve to make the reader acquainted with his style:—"From Hebron," says he, "men go to Bethlehem in half a day, for it is but five miles, and it is a very fair way and through pleasant woods. Bethlehem is but a little city, long and narrow, and was walled and enclosed with a great ditch; it hath been formerly called Ephrata, as holy writ saith, '*Ecce audivimus cum in Ephrata,*' &c., that is, '*Lo we heard of the same at Ephrata.*' And near the end of the city towards the east, is a very fair and goodly church, which has many towers and pinnacles, being strongly built. Within that church are four and forty great marble pillars; and not far from this church is a field which flourished very strangely, as you shall hear. The cause is, forasmuch as a fair maiden that was accused wrongfully for that she had done dishonestly, for which cause she was doomed to die, and to be burnt in that place, to which she was led. And as the wood began to burn about her, she made her prayer to our Lord, as she was not guilty of that thing, that he would help her, that it might be known to all men. And having thus prayed, she entered the fire, and those branches that were burning became red roses, and those that were not kindled became white roses, and these were the first roses that any man ever saw: And so was the maiden saved through the grace of God, wherefore that field is called the field that God flourished, for that it was full of roses." The wonders which he relates of the isles in the eastern seas are less pleasing to the imagination. Thus, the people of the isle of Raso are said to hang their friends who are supposed to be near dying on the boughs of trees, in order that the birds might eat them, saying, it was better that the birds—which are angels of God—should eat them than the worms. In another island hounds are said to be kept to strangle the sick, which, after they have been thus destroyed, are eaten for 'venison.' The isle of Macumeran is celebrated for being inhabited by men and women who have heads like dogs' heads. In Dodyn the people, it is said, beat even their sick parents to death, and then assemble all their friends and relatives to feast on their remains. Other islands are distinguished like that of Macumeran for the monstrosities of human shape which they produce, and one is especially mentioned, the inhabitants of which have no heads, and to supply the defect have their eyes in their shoulders and their mouths in their breasts. Numerous instances might be produced of fables of another class, but the above specimen of Sir John's veracious gravity will enable the reader to form a tolerably correct idea of the privilege which travellers assumed to themselves

in the fourteenth century, or rather, perhaps, of the taste which prevailed at that period, and which a man desirous of reputation as a traveller dared not venture to oppose. Steele and Addison unite in celebrating the fertility of the venerable tourist's imagination, and observe, that among all the authors of his kind he deserves the foremost place for "the copiousness of his invention and the greatness of his genius." It has, however, been discovered, that Sir John merits less praise for originality than the applause of these wits implies. From the comparison which has been instituted between his journal and that of Oderic de Portenau, it is found that he borrowed whole pages from that writer, while most of his marvellous tales are traced with equal clearness to the old romances, which were then generally well-known on the continent.

Notwithstanding the medley of extravagance which occupied so large a portion of this journal, Sir John enjoyed an extensive reputation both in England and abroad. Some of his relations, indeed, are ascribed to the monks, who are supposed to have added them of their own accord; and it is not improbable, but that while he condescended to amuse the ignorant with fables, he obtained the respect of the more enlightened by a juster account of what he had seen and heard. It was chiefly to alleviate the unpleasant sensation of languor which he suffered after his return to England that he wrote the account of his journey, but the amusement which it afforded him was not sufficient to cure his ennui, and after a vain endeavour to remain contented at home, he again set out for the continent, and repaired to Liege, where he took up his residence, and where he died in the year 1372. A handsome monument in the principal church of that city, records his honourable descent, and the faith in which he died. His name richly deserves to be remembered; however little he did to promote the interests of science, he was a man of singular resolution, and contributed, if he did nothing farther, to awaken a spirit of curiosity and enterprise. It is evident, from the character of his journal, that knowledge of every species was subjected at the time he wrote to the sway of superstition; and when it is remembered that in little more than a hundred years from that period, Vasco de Gama rendered the remote shores of India familiar to every merchant in Europe, and Columbus had successfully traversed the Atlantic in search of shores before unheard of, the visionary tales of Sir John Mandeville, taken as a starting point, will serve to show in the strongest manner the extent to which in one century improvement may be carried. A similar inference will be drawn from his narrative when it is recollected, that at the time when his stories of Indians without heads, and other such marvels, were received with delight in England, the Venetians and Genoese viewed those countries as the proper seat of their commerce, and would have been as little inclined to credit his stories as they were ready to follow the suggestions of the boldest trafficker. As England was enabled to extend its commerce, the narratives of travellers were filled with contents of a very different nature, and those of Sir John Mandeville were speedily forgotten by all but the most curious inquirers into the state of our early literature.



## Robert Longlande.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1350.

It deserves to be spoken to the praise of poetry, that those who have cultivated the art have, in numerous instances, shown themselves very superior to the age in which they lived. Philosophers have frequently received this praise; and every anticipation, however slight, of improvements in science,—every glance they have given at a world advancing in light and intelligence,—has been justly regarded as a token of the loftiest intellectual power. But the noble elevation of poetical freedom,—its superiority to the fashions of the day,—its enmity to real prejudices and whatever else betokens an advance on the age,—are far less carefully noted; and poetry is thus deprived of the credit which in some instances has been remarkably its due. This is especially the case with more than one of our early English writers, who, living in an iron age, when superstition was at its height, when every art that peculation could invent to keep the people in ignorance was exercised, stood boldly forth from among their brethren, and ventured to proclaim the laws of plain sense and reason. Robert Longlande belongs eminently to this number, and it is a matter of regret that tradition has not preserved more memorials of a man who deserves so well of his country and posterity. Antiquaries differ as to the precise period when he flourished, but the dates 1350 and 1362 point out with some degree of certainty the time at which he completed the work to which he owes his fame. It is also known, that he was a fellow of Oriel college, Oxford, and a secular priest. To the latter circumstance may probably be ascribed some portion of the freedom and intelligence, and still more the keen, biting sarcasm, which characterize his poem. The opposition which long prevailed between the secular and regular clergy, combined with the greater intercourse with society which the former enjoyed, gave to that class of the clerical order a very important advantage over their monastic brethren. Obligated to defend themselves and their conduct by continual appeals from the prejudices which had been fostered by the long reign of darkness to those practical rules of wisdom which it was their interest to inculcate, they naturally acquired a readiness in judging of men and affairs which could scarcely fail of enlarging their views, and rendering them useful instructors. To a man of good natural powers it must have afforded an immense advantage to stand in this position. While his professional character would give him innumerable opportunities of studying the world, it would prevent his being ruined with it; and while he would enjoy much of the reverence with which all orders of the clergy were then regarded, he would be free from the trammels which the regulars wore as the price of their respectability. That Longlande possessed ample qualifications for making the best use of his experience, his work abundantly proves, and the labours of critics have rarely been more profitably employed than they have been in elucidating or correcting the pages of this author. The ‘*Vision of Pierce Plowman*’ is a satire on the most conspicuous follies and superstitions of his contemporaries. No rank or profession escapes his bold and sweeping sar-

casm. He looks on the world with the eye of a severe moralist, but not without the gay feeling of a poet. His blows are quick and heavy, but he fights with a well-polished weapon; and while we may fairly give him the honour due to a useful instructor, we may, at the same time, consider his poem as deserving a high rank, as such, among the earliest of our classics. His own order suffers most severely under his hand, but he was too good a satirist to confine his views to one class of mankind, and in the introduction to the poem he represents himself as contemplating a vast and mixed multitude, composed of men of every age and degree:—

“ And as I beheld on hey, est on to the sonne,  
 I saw a towr on a toft, ryaly emaked,  
 A depe dale be nethe, a donjoun therein,  
 With depe dykys and dyrke, and dredful of sygth;  
 A fayr feld ful of folke fond I ther betwene,—  
 Of al maner of men, the mene and the ryche,  
 Werkyng and wanderynge, as the world askyth;  
 Summe put hem to the plow, pleyd hem ful seelde,  
 In syttyng and sowyng swonken full harde,  
 And wan that wastors with glotenys dystroid;  
 And somme put hem to pryde,” &c. &c.

This vision and the others, in the description of which the poem consists, was seen by the author, as he represents, while he was sleeping, after having enjoyed a long and solitary ramble among the Malverne hills. In this respect he has followed the plan of more than one other early poet; and the student of Italian literature will remember that the famous Brunetto Latini, the preceptor of Dante, has formed his principal work on this system. The love of allegory rendered such a method of introducing the subject almost necessary, or, at least, gave a species of natural existence to the personages of the fable, and a verisimilitude to the relations, which they would not otherwise have possessed. In the land of dreams we may allow a man to converse with Avarice, Bribery, &c., as living visible personages; and if the poet has the art to lead his reader over the shadowy threshold, his descriptions thenceforth assume the form and air of realities. We find in Longlande's work some personifications which we with difficulty admit in the present day to intercourse with our fancy. Simony and Theology have too many grave associations in their train to flow easily into verse; but in the age when Longlande wrote, there was little nicety of taste in this respect, and whatever could be named was considered as lawfully subject to the process of personification. Thus, among his chief characters are Do-Well, Do-Better, and Do-Best; Do-Evil is another; Wit and Thought are both active characters in the plot; See-Well, Say-Well, and Hear-Well, have also distinct offices to perform. The last mentioned personages are honoured with the appellation of Sir; and accompanying them is 'Sir Godfray Go-Well.' The great object of their labour is to preserve the Soul, represented as a lady with the name of Anima, and the following lines will show how skilfully the author manages his numerous train of shadows:—

“ Sir Dowel dwellith, coth Witt, nogt a day hennes  
 In a castel that kynde (nature) made, of four kynnes thynges;  
 Of erthe and of aier is hit made, medled togedris

With wynde and with watir, wittirly enjoyned.  
 Kynde hath closed therynne, craftely withalle  
 A Lemman that he loveth, lyk to hym selve,  
 Anima she hatte, æc Envy hire hateth,  
 A proud priker of Fraunce, *princeps hujus mundi*,  
 And wold wynde hire away with wiles and he myglatte;  
 Ac Kynde knoweth this wel, and kepith hire the better,  
 And doth hire with Sire Dowel is duk of these marchis;  
 Dobest is hire damsel, Sire Dowellys doughter,  
 To serve this lady leely, both late and rathe.  
 Dobest is above both a bieschoppis pere,  
 That he bitt mot be don he reuleth hem alle.  
 Anima that lady, is led by his leryng;  
 Ac the constable of that castel, that kepith al the watche,  
 Is a wise knightte withalle, Sire Inwitt he hatte,  
 And hath fyve fair sones bi his first wyf,  
 Sire Seewel and Saywel, and Huyrewel the end,  
 Sir Worchewel with thyn hond, a wyghtte man of strengthe,  
 And Sire Godfray Gowel, grete lordis forsothe  
 These fyve ben y sette, to save this lady Anima  
 Till Kynde come or send," &c.

The boldness of the poet, as well as his ingenuity, is shown in many spirited descriptions of the luxury of the clergy, and of the corruptions to which it led. Destitute as we are of all other means of judging of Longlande's personal character, we have so clear an image in his poetry of a free and lofty minded man,—of one whose sagacity gave vigour to his talents, and whose sense of moral right was equal both to his talents and his sagacity,—that we can scarcely be mistaken in ascribing to him a portion of the praise belonging to those qualities.

## John Gower.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1326.—DIED A. D. 1402.

ON arriving at the name of Gower, the literary historian finds himself entering on a new and wider track of inquiry. Poetry—when that celebrated man began to write—had been long cultivated in this country; and the metrical romances of 'Sir Guy,' of 'the Squire of Low Degree,' 'Sir Degore,' and others, evince considerable power of imagination, and no slight mastery over the strong but yet unsettled idioms of the Saxon English. The poems of Adam Davie, who lived at the commencement of the fourteenth century, of Richard Hampole, an Augustine monk, who wrote about forty years later, and those of Robert Longlande, the author of the far-famed 'Vision of Pierce Plowman,' connect the period of wild fanciful romance with that of Gower and Chaucer. But these early productions created a taste which they could not satisfy. There were glimpses of beauty in the rude conceptions they embodied,—an occasional sweetness in the construction of the hardy verse; but these only made the readers of those times long for demonstrations of a power which the art of the poet had not yet attained. It required a period of luxury and refinement to give that polish to language which renders it a sure and mirror-like medium for the operations of genius. The same refinement was necessary to give the poet a field sufficiently wide and fruitful in subjects for the exer-



cise of his talent. In a rude age, it is only the wildest creations of the imagination which can secure attention, and these, however modified, will always belong to the same class, and be imbued with the same spirit. Nothing can be more erroneous than the common notion that an uncivilized period is the most favourable to the development of the imagination. The freedom with which it is allowed to act, is far more than counterbalanced by the barrenness and poverty of ideas with which that freedom is accompanied. Imagination, like all other faculties of the mind, requires nourishment; but it is only in civilized communities—in which, though passion may be concealed, there are stronger sympathies at work, more varied combinations of feeling, more both to fear and love,—that it can find enough to preserve it in a state, not of seeming, but of real activity. Hence it is, that the poetry of barbarous times is so generally monotonous though wild, and that the grandest triumphs of the imagination have been witnessed in ages of advanced civilization. Homer, Æschylus, and his followers,—Shakspeare and Milton,—bear ample testimony to the truth of this observation; and if their works be compared with the productions of authors who lived in more unpolished periods, it will be at once seen how little the imagination owes to a barbarous freedom to what it does to polish and cultivation.

Gower and his distinguished cotemporary were the first English poets who enjoyed all the advantages to be reaped from an improved age, from a highly refined education, and from constant intercourse with the noblest personages of the land. The reign of Edward the Third is celebrated in our national annals, as not less remarkable for the splendour of its events than the luxury which it introduced among the people. Every art by which domestic comfort could be increased was favoured by the wealthy populace, now growing into estimation as one of the orders of the state. The greater importance attached to the decisions of parliament conferred a respectability upon them which they had not before possessed, and hence not only diffused a general desire for the improvements of life, but taught them to appreciate better the qualifications of men of genius. While the people were thus prepared for a purer species of poetry than any that had yet been cultivated, and while the progress of intelligence was every day increasing its materials, and widening its range, the language was also undergoing an alteration strongly calculated to improve its harmony and flexibility. The growing pride of the nation, as well as its obvious interests, made the law which prohibited the further use of French in public deeds, as acceptable as it was politic. But the worst impediment to the refinement of the native language was thence removed. The Saxon words and idioms which yet stood out sharp and knotty obstacles to the smooth flow of its current, admitted of being worn down by the stream as it strengthened and enlarged itself; but the hitherto allowed superiority of French prevented any systematic attempts to improve it, and but for the conquests of Edward, and the advancement of national independence, the 'well of English undefiled' might never have existed.

It was under these circumstances that Gower and Chaucer laid the foundation of their school of poetry. The reign of Richard the Second gave a further impulse to the love of luxury, and the passion

for improvement which manifested themselves in the time of his predecessor. A spirit of religious independence and inquiry then began to appear, and the corruptions which had shortly before been the prey only of a few keen wits, were exposed by Wickliffe to the examination and censure of the people at large. The attention of all classes was thus by turns excited to political and religious inquiry, and the popular mind every where outgrew the garments which had been woven for it by ignorance and superstition.

We unfortunately possess few records of the personal history of Gower, but the little which is known of it shows him to have enjoyed from early youth all the literary advantages that could be procured in the period when he flourished. The patience of antiquaries has traced his origin to a wealthy family of the same name, settled at Stitenham, in Yorkshire; but the genealogy thus made out for him has been since disputed, and the descent of Gower may, therefore, be considered as still unsettled. That his education, however, was of the most liberal kind, is allowed by all his biographers, but where he received it is as much a matter of dispute as his origin. All we know is, that having finished his preliminary studies, he became a student of law in the Inner Temple, where he was distinguished for his great professional acquirements, and enjoyed the character of being as accomplished in general literature as he was in jurisprudence.

Both fortune and reputation rewarded the industry with which he cultivated his various talents. It has been conjectured by some writers that he received the honour of knighthood, and held a high legal appointment, but there is not sufficient foundation for this opinion, and the only well-authenticated part of the relation is, that he amassed considerable wealth, and that the greater portion of it was the fruit of his professional skill and perseverance. The knowledge of this circumstance explains the allusions which are made by Chaucer to the sober and moral character of his friend, and affords an interesting picture of a man of genius, combining, in this early period of our history, the love of letters with the regular habits of business.

It was while actively engaged in his professional occupations, that he composed the greater part of the works which entitle him to be ranked among the restorers of literature; and it has been recorded to his honour, that the chief object he had in view, in most of what he wrote, was the correction of those follies and vices which had already sprung from the luxury of the nobles, and the corresponding grossness of the people. He appears, however, to have advanced some way in his literary career, before he escaped the trammels which the fashionable love of French had imposed on so many minds. His principal work consists of three parts, the titles of which are, *Speculum Meditantis*, *Vox Clamantis*, *Confessio Amantis*. Of these, the first is written in French, and the ten books into which it is divided are occupied with general delineations of virtue and vice, with exhortations and advice to the reprobate for their restoration to hope, and with eulogies on the virtues to be cultivated in the marriage state. The second part, or the 'Vox Clamantis,' shows the disinclination he still entertained towards English, or at least his unwillingness to trust the fame he was desirous of reaping to his native tongue. Seven books of Latin elegiacs were the production of his laborious pen, under the above title, and they

exhibit, both by their style and subject, the fondness with which the scholars of the age still regarded the works of the monkish historians. The insurrection which shook the throne of the unfortunate Richard to its foundations, was the subject of this strange poem; but neither of the parts of Gower's great work here mentioned was ever printed; and had he produced nothing else, his name, it is most probable, would not now be known. It may, however, be conjectured, that in his employment of French and Latin, he was encouraged by the example of his celebrated cotemporaries in other countries. The fame which had been acquired by the earlier French bards, naturally rendered their language the favourite vehicle for poetry of the lighter species; and the veneration for Latin was still so great, that Petrarch, it is well known, scorned the idea of deriving glory from his compositions in modern Italian.

But the '*Confessio Amantis*' amply vindicates our author's claim to the honour of an English writer, while the occasion of its being composed affords a proof of the fame he had acquired by the preceding parts of the poem. While rowing one day on the Thames, the king happened to meet him in the royal barge, and no sooner recognised his person, but gave him a signal to enter. The conversation between the monarch and the poet lasted for some time, and at its conclusion, his Majesty desired him to resume his poetical labours, expressing his wish in the significant phrase, that he would '*book some new thing*.' The command of the king was forthwith obeyed, and Richard proved in this instance at least, a judicious patron. It would afford the reader little instruction to give an abstract of the '*Confessio Amantis*.' An idea, however, of this singular work may be formed from its being simply stated, that it embodies the rules of love laid down by the three very distinct teachers on the subject, the romantic troubadours, the Platonic Italians, and the sensual Ovid. In illustration of these rules, the author expends all the learning of his age, and leaves uncited neither historian nor philosopher of whose works or even of whose name he had ever heard. The strange medley of learning thus brought together, has little beauty to the eye of a modern reader, but if the age be considered in which it appeared, we shall see reason to believe that it was regarded in a far different light by those for whom it was written. Knowledge had then as deep a charm as poetry, and the stories and mysteries told or alluded to by Gower, would thus excite an interest sufficiently strong to atone for any appearance of incongruity. But, besides the defects in the plan of the work, it has others of a more serious kind in its execution. It is generally allowed to exhibit very little invention, to be tame in expression, and to be deficient, in short, in most of those excellencies which characterise the productions of Chaucer. But it is not so much in relation to the genius of the writer as in reference to the age when it was produced, that a work of early date should be considered. The acute observation of Addison in respect to medals, pertains, in one particular, to ancient poems. "The intrinsic value," says he, "of an old coin does not consist in its metal, but its erudition:" and in the same manner, the interest of a poem such as that we are considering, depends less on the intrinsic beauty of the language or conception, than on its relative merit when compared with other productions



of the same, or an immediately preceding period. But in placing the 'Vox Amantis' by the side of the romances which, with few exceptions, were the only poems in the language, its superiority is at once evident. The author evinces a just sense of the dignity and fit application of his art: his subject is varied by all the digressions and ornaments, which it only wanted a higher degree of skill to render as splendid and attractive as they were various, and the sentiments are almost throughout full of good sense and dignity. So much valued was the work on these accounts, that Berthelette, the printer, did not hesitate to dedicate his edition to Henry the Eighth, and in his epistle to the monarch, says, among many other things equally laudatory, that "who-soever in reading it doth consider it well, shall find that it is plentifully stuffed, and furnished with manifold eloquent reasons, sharp and quick arguments, and examples of great authority, persuading unto virtue, not only taken out of the poets, orators, history, writers, and philosophers, but also out of the Holy Scripture." To this he adds, that there is, in his opinion, "no man, but that he may, by reading of this work, get right great knowledge, as well for the understanding of many and divers customs, whose reasons, sayings, and histories, are translated into this work, as for the plenty of English words and vulgars, besides the furtherance of the life to virtue."

Gower was far advanced in years when he produced this poem. The most distinguished of his cotemporaries, Chaucer, had been his intimate friend from an early period of their life, and there are allusions in the works of each which show how sincerely both the one and the other esteemed the talents of his companion. Thus, in the 'Confessio Amantis,' the author makes Venus say—

— Grete well Chaucer whan ye mete,  
As my disciple and my poete,  
For in the flours of his youth,  
In sundrie wise, as he well couth,  
Of detees, and of songes glade,  
The which he for my sake made,  
The loude fulfilled is over all:  
Whereof to him in speciall  
Above all other I am most holde.

In a similar spirit of compliment Chaucer thus concludes his *Troilus* and *Cresside* :—

O moral Gower, this boke I directe  
To the, and to the philosophical Strode,  
To vouchsafe there hede is for to conete,  
Of your benignities and zelis gode.

That similarity of tastes and pursuits for which these distinguished men were conspicuous, was fully sufficient to unite them in friendship, when there were so few others of like talent or disposition. But an additional cause has been assigned for their intimacy. While Chaucer possessed the patronage of John of Gaunt, Gower was equally attached to Thomas of Woodstock, duke of Gloucester, the other of the king's uncles who shared in the project of ruling the nation without the interference of the young monarch. In what degree our poet involved himself in political transactions cannot now be determined,

but it is probable that he, as well as Chaucer, took a deep interest in the events of the times, and that, learned and eloquent as he was, he exercised some influence over the party to which he belonged. Certain it is, that the death of the unfortunate duke of Gloucester was openly and pathetically lamented by him in his poems, and there is reason to think, that he lost no opportunity of expressing his dislike to the measures of Richard's government. His good sense, his prudent and virtuous character, would naturally make him the opponent of violence and licentiousness, the too prominent features of that unfortunate monarch's reign; but it is equally probable, from the same consideration, that his political conduct had no tincture of that dishonesty which was many years after laid to his charge. The '*Confessio Amantis*' was, in the first instance, dedicated to Richard, and the removal of this dedication to make room for that to Henry the Fourth, provoked the vituperative eloquence of more than one critic in a subsequent age. It should, however, have been remembered, that Gower, to all appearance, was never a courtier, and that he was so far from being a renegade to his party, by seeking to honour the new monarch, that he only thereby continued to express opinions which he had advocated throughout his life. But the age and infirmities of the poet were of themselves sufficient to guard him from the supposed dishonesty. In the first year of Henry's reign, the loss of sight cut him off from the business of the world, and put, as he pathetically laments, an end to his career. Universally respected, possessed of great wealth, and satisfied with the fame he had acquired, it is scarcely to be credited, that he would now forfeit his reputation for honesty to acquire the smiles of a monarch, whose favour could do him no service, and with whom he had no errors to propitiate.

Gower was Chaucer's senior, but he survived him about two years. His death took place in 1402, and the sumptuous monument in which his remains are deposited attests both his taste and his munificence. The church of St Saviour's in Southwark, which contains this interesting record, was sometime before his decease destroyed by fire, and it was solely owing to his large contributions, and the exertions he made, that the venerable church which has excited the admiration of so many generations, rose from its ruins. The most curious feature in the monument under which he is buried, is the representation of his great work, in the form of three gilt volumes, lettered with the respective titles of the parts into which the poem was divided. Deeply imbued with piety, and attention to the rites of the faith which he professed, he founded a chantry at his tomb, and the time-hallowed aisle of St Mary Overee—as the church was formerly called—though the ceremonial which the poet instituted is forgotten, is still sacred to his memory.

The fame of Gower has been almost entirely lost sight of in modern times, through the brilliant reputation enjoyed by Chaucer. But it is judiciously observed by Warton, that "if the latter had not existed, the compositions of Gower alone would have been sufficient to rescue the reigns of Edward the Third and Richard the Second from the imputation of barbarism." In some of the minor poems which have survived him, a delicacy of thought and feeling is manifested, as superior to the ordinary style of sentiment prevalent in his age, as was his language

to that of most preceding versifiers. We shall here insert one specimen of his versification from the 'Florent':—

" My lord," she saide, "*grand-merci* !"  
 For of this word that ye now sayn,  
 That ye have made me sovereign,  
 My destiny is over passed ;  
 That never hereafter shall be *lassed* <sup>2</sup>  
 My beauty, which that I now have,  
 Till I betake unto my grave.  
 Both night and day, as I am now,  
 I shall alway be such to you.  
 The kinges daughter of Sicile  
 I am ; and *fell* <sup>3</sup> but sith a while,  
 As I was with my father late,  
 That my step-mother, for an hate  
 Which toward me she hath begun,  
*For-shope* <sup>4</sup> me, till I hadde won  
 The love and the sovereignty  
 Of what knight that in his degree  
 All other passeth of good name :  
 And, as men sayn, ye be the same,  
 The deed proveth it is so.  
 Thus am I yours for evermo."

*Tho* was pleasance and joy enough ;  
 Each one with other play'd and *lough* ;<sup>5</sup>  
 They lived long, and well they far'd,  
 And clerkes, that this chance heard,  
 They written it in evidence,  
 To teach, how that obedience  
 May well fortune a man to love,  
 And set him in his lust above.

By his habit of moralizing in the lighter productions of literature, Gower did a greater service to his countrymen than is commonly placed to his credit. The duty of teaching had been long confined to the clergy, and superstition and self-interest had, in a great measure, deprived that order of its ability to inculcate morality with a free and healthy spirit. Legends and anathemas are neither of them good supports of virtue, and it was in these that the bulk of the priesthood chiefly dealt. When men of sense and probity in the world began to set forth the worth of holiness and truth, unblended with the errors, and free from the fierceness of superstition or pride, a new tone was given to popular opinion ; the maxims of piety and virtue had a freer circulation ; and literature was allowed a place by the altar and the throne, because it was henceforth to perform an important part in the improvement of the human character. Gower was among the first to effect this valuable purpose, and his name, consequently, ought to be had in remembrance, not only for the confessedly great share he took in the formation of our language, but for the still greater benefit he conferred on the general cause of literature and morality.

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks.

<sup>2</sup> It befell.

<sup>3</sup> Lessened.

<sup>4</sup> Mis-shaped.

<sup>5</sup> Laughed.







*Geoffrey Chaucer*

*Engraved by J. Freeman  
from a painting in the collection of the Hon. House*

## Chaucer.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1328.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1400.

HITHERTO our poetry may be considered as only struggling to make its escape from the enchaining but gradually relaxing frosts of winter ; we are now to look upon it—to borrow the beautiful similitude of Mr Warton—as suddenly visited by an influence like to that of those “ cloudless skies and that tepid atmosphere which sometimes gladden for a single day an English spring, and fill the hearts of men with the visionary prospect of a speedy summer.” Our poetic annals, in so far as they are really worth tracing for the gratification of poetic feeling, may be fairly said to commence with the name of Geoffrey Chaucer. The events of Chaucer’s life, in so far as they are really known to us, may be soon told, although most of his biographers have, by means of numberless disputes and conjectures, spun out the detail of them to very considerable length, and the latest writer who has undertaken the task, Mr Godwin, has actually contrived, without the aid of almost a single new fact, to extend the narrative over two quarto volumes. Nay, he tells us in his preface, that he was inclined to go on till he had written four quartos instead of two, had not his publisher assured him that the public would not sympathize with so swollen a structure blown out of such scanty materials. In truth, of the few incidents of the poet’s history which rest upon authentic testimony, nearly all are mere naked dates ; and of those which have been repeated by his successive biographers from more questionable sources, most are extremely doubtful, and some are quite improbable, or proved to be unfounded. Various accounts have been given even of the place of his birth ; but he himself, in one of his prose pieces, his ‘ Testament of Love,’ seems expressly to intimate that he was a native of London. Of his family nothing whatever can be said to be known. Some suppose him to have been of noble descent ; while others, judging by the name—which, in old French, signifies a breeches-maker—conclude that he must have sprung from a plebeian stock. A common tradition is that his father was one Richard Chaucer, who kept a tavern, according to Stowe, in the Royal street, at the corner of Kirton-lane, and was buried in 1348 in his parish church of St Mary Aldermary, to which he left his house and its appurtenances. The old editors of his works, and most of the other writers who mention the circumstance, tell us that he was born in the year 1328. But the original authority upon which this date rests is not known ; and doubts have been sometimes entertained of its correctness. Mr Godwin, in consequence of the language of a recently discovered document, was at one time inclined to fix his birth so late as 1344 ; but on farther consideration, he reverted to the common opinion. He certainly received a learned education, and most probably studied at one of the universities, but whether at Oxford or Cambridge is doubtful. Most of his biographers make him to have attended both, as the easiest way of reconciling the accounts of different authorities. From the university they transfer him to the Middle, or, as some will have it, the Inner Temple ; but for the belief that he ever was a student of law, there is little or no foundation.



Speght, indeed, in his edition of the poet's works, published in 1597, tells us that a Mr Buckley, many years before, had seen a record in the Temple, in which it was mentioned that Geoffrey Chaucer had been fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet street. But, whatever we might be entitled to infer from this vague notice, its value as a proof that Chaucer was of the Temple is completely destroyed by the remark of Speght's very intelligent friend and correspondent, Francis Thynne, in his 'Animadversions,' published only a few years ago by Mr Todd, from the MS. in Lord Stafford's library, that this house was not frequented as a place for education in the law at all till towards the latter end of the reign of Edward III.; "at which time," says Thynne, "Chaucer was a grave man, holden in great credit, and employed in embassy; so that methinketh he should not be of that house; and yet, if he then were, I should judge it strange that he should violate the rules of peace and gravity in those years." Only sixteen years after the death of Edward III., Chaucer, as Thynne observes, is described by his friend Gower as an old man,—a fact, by the bye, which strongly confirms the earlier and common date assigned to his birth. Thynne, we may here notice, in these most acute and sensible animadversions, detects the blunder first committed by Speght, and in which he was followed by many other critics, among the rest by Warton and Ritson, of adducing a passage from Gower's 'Confessio Amantis,' beginning—

"Greet well Chaucer, when ye meet,  
As my disciple and my poet;"

as a proof that Gower was not only Chaucer's senior, but had even been his master and instructor in his art. The words in question, in fact, are uttered not by Gower at all, but by Venus. It is the goddess of love who describes Chaucer as her poet and disciple. It is somewhat curious that although Warton, in one place,<sup>1</sup> quotes the commencing lines of this speech of Venus in the common and erroneous sense, he afterwards,<sup>2</sup> although by a citation of the wrong book, refers to it as the language of the goddess, and even gives the correct interpretation of the very lines he had before misapplied. This is not noticed by Warton's very learned and ingenious editor, who, however, corrects in a note the misstatement in the earlier page.

In the year 1367 an annuity of 20 marks was conferred upon Chaucer by Edward III., and, in the patent of this grant, which has been printed by Rymer, the poet is styled by the king *Valletus noster*, or, as Mr Tyrwhitt translates it, 'our yeoman,' a title given to young men before they were knighted. "How long he had served the king," says this writer, "in that or any other station, and what particular merits were rewarded by his royal bounty, are points equally unknown." Before this, indeed, Leland and his other early biographers tell us that he had travelled through France and the low countries; but for this statement there seems to be no proper authority. Soon after his return home, they say, he became page to the king; and his annuity, it is insinuated, was bestowed upon him as a reward for the delight which

<sup>1</sup> History of English Poetry, vol. ii. p. 177, edit. 1824.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 332.

he communicated to his royal master by the poetical effusions and sallies of wit in which his genius already distinguished itself. Whether in this or in some other way, he appears at any rate to have gradually risen in favour at court; for four years afterwards we find another annuity of the same amount conferred upon him, and the year following he received the honourable appointment of envoy, along with two other gentlemen, to the republic of Genoa, to manage some public negotiation, the nature of which, however, is not known. A visit to Italy, the land of beauty, romance, and song, could not fail to produce the happiest effect upon such a genius as that of Chaucer. It appears to have been in the course of this visit that he met with Petrarch at Padua, and learned from him, as he tells us himself, the pathetic story of Griselda, which he afterwards so beautifully versified, and which had just been translated into Latin by Petrarch—who died the following year—from Boccaccio's *Decameron*. On his return to England he received a new mark of the royal favour in the grant of a pitcher of wine daily for life, which was afterwards commuted for another annuity of twenty marks. The same year he obtained the lucrative place of comptroller of the customs of wool and hides for the port of London. If this appointment was given to Chaucer by the king in testimony of his majesty's admiration of his poetical abilities, it was a reward perhaps rather more substantial than appropriate; but the poet, we daresay, did not much object to it on that account, even although the appointment was accompanied with the proviso that "the said Geoffrey write with his own hand his rolls touching the said office, and continually reside there, and do and execute all things pertaining to the said office in his own proper person, and not by his substitute." Notwithstanding the labour and diligence thus demanded of him, the period during which he held this office seems to have been the happiest and most prosperous of Chaucer's life. He afterwards, in his *Testament of Love*, speaks of his condition at this time as having been that of one "glorious in worldly wellfulness, and having such goods in wealth as makes men rich." The dues and occasional perquisites of his office, together with his previous grants, must have produced him a considerable income; although it is probable that his biographers have greatly overrated its amount when they state him to have been in the receipt of about a thousand pounds sterling a-year. Nor does the attention he was obliged to give to business appear to have withdrawn him from the acquaintance of the Muses. In a very interesting passage of his *House of Fame*, he has put into the mouth of the eagle, who acts a principal part in the story, the following account of his own habits, which, from the mention of his reckonings, seems evidently to refer to this period of his life, during which, therefore, we may presume the poem to have been written:—

" ——— thou hast no tidings,  
Of Lovis folk if they be glade,  
Ne of nothing else that God made,  
And not only from far countree  
That no tidings come in to thee;  
Not of thy very neighbors  
That dwellen almost at thy doors,  
Thou hearest neither that ne this;  
For whan thy labour all done is,

And hast made all thy reckonings,  
 Instead of rest, and of new things,  
 Thou goest home to thine house anon,  
 And all so dumb as any stone,  
 Thou sittest at another book  
 Till fully daisied is thy look,  
 And livest thus as an hermite," &c.

From a previous part of the same address, we learn that he had already spent much of his time in the composition of love verses:—"Jupiter," says the eagle, when announcing the honour that was to be conferred upon him by the king of the gods, "hath of thee great ruth" (pity):—

"For that thou hast so truilly,  
 So long served ententively,  
 His blindé nephew Cupido,  
 And the fair queen Venus alsò,  
 Withouten guerdon ever yet,  
 And na-the-less hast set thy wit,  
 Although in thy head full lit (litt)le is,  
 To make books, songis, and ditties.  
 In rhyme, or ellis in cadence,  
 As thou best canst, in reverence  
 Of Love, and of his servants eke,  
 That have his service sought and seek."

The language and tone of the whole of this account will probably be thought to be adverse to the supposition that Chaucer was at this time a married man. His early biographers, however, tell us that he had long before this united himself to Philippa Rowet, the sister of Catherine Rowet, who had been brought over from Hainault by King Edward's third son, the famous John of Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, to be one of the attendants on his countess, Blanch, but who soon became the duke's mistress, and finally his wife. There are considerable doubts, however, not only as to the time of this marriage of Chaucer's, but as to both the Christian and surname of his wife, and even as to whether she was any relation at all of the lady who afterwards became duchess of Lancaster. All that appears certain is, that our poet had, from a very early date, attached himself to the fortunes of Gaunt, and that, throughout the whole of his subsequent life, he was evidently very intimately entangled with the movements of that able but ambitious and restless character. It is by no means improbable that he owed his first rise at court mainly to the duke's protection and favour; but this connexion, upon the whole, brought upon him quite as much trouble and calamity as honour and profit. He continued, however, to hold his office at the custom-house, at least throughout the reign of Edward; and in 1377 we find him again sent on an embassy, along with other commissioners, to France, in order to negotiate a marriage between the young prince of Wales and one of the daughters of the French king,—a project, however, which did not take effect. Even for some time after the accession of the new king, and so long as the duke of Lancaster was at the head of affairs, Chaucer, there can be no doubt, enjoyed the benefit of the prosperity of his patron. But this state of things did not last long. The duke had, for many years, been connected with the party of Wickliffe and his followers; and this associa-



tion, by enlisting against him all the ancient and more powerful interests of the state, eventually undermined his power, and drove him from the helm of affairs. It is probable that upon this occasion Chaucer was deprived of his office of comptroller of the customs; although all that is really known, is, that from a state of affluence he suddenly fell into great difficulties and distress, so much so, that in order to satisfy his creditors, he was obliged to sell his annuities, and even, it is said, to have recourse to the king's protection in order to save himself from imprisonment. The utmost confusion and obscurity hangs over this portion of his history; but, about the year 1383, he appears, either on account of his debts, or, as other authorities assert, in consequence of his having exposed himself to danger by engaging in the unsuccessful insurrection of the followers of John of Northampton, the reforming mayor of London, to have fled from the country, and taken refuge first in France, and afterwards in Zealand. After some time, however, he returned to England; and, if we may trust the common account, made his peace with the crown by making a full disclosure of the guilt of his associates,—an act which naturally and justly exposed him for a long period afterwards to much odium. But it would be unfair to form any decisive opinion as to Chaucer's actual conduct from the vague accounts that have come down to us of this unexplained transaction. For one thing, it does not appear that any person suffered in consequence of his information. As for himself, he is said to have retired to a small house at Woodstock, resolved to spend the remainder of his days at a distance from civil broils. When, some time after this, the credit of the duke of Lancaster revived, after his return from Spain with great wealth, and his success in marrying his two daughters to the kings of Castile and Portugal, Chaucer seems again to have partaken in some degree of the sunshine of royal favour,—one of his pensions at least being restored to him, and a pipe of wine being also granted to him annually out of the customs of London. But it does not appear that he was ever again induced to quit his country retreat for the court. On the accession of Henry IV. the son of his old patron John of Gaunt, in 1399, he received a renewal of his former patents, and also a grant of an additional annuity of forty marks for life. But he did not long survive the receipt of these favours; for, having been obliged, we are told, to come up to town to arrange some of his affairs which the late convulsion in the state had thrown into disorder, the fatigue which he underwent proved too great for his strength, and, falling ill, he died on the 25th of October, 1400, in the seventy-second year of his age. He was buried, as Caxton, the printer tells us in his edition of the poet's prose translation of Boethius, "in the abbey of Westminster, before the chapel of St Bennet; by whose sepulchre is written on a table hanging on a pillar his epitaph made by a poet laureate." Chaucer is generally supposed to have been interred in the same spot in which Dryden's body was afterwards laid. Of any family which he left, nothing is known with certainty. One of his prose works, his 'Treatise on the Astrolabe,' bears to have been written for the instruction of his son Lewis, who was then—about the year 1391—ten years of age. But the biographers give him, besides Lewis, another and older son Thomas, who rose to be speaker of the house of commons, and to occupy various other high offices in the reigns of Henry IV., V., and VI. This Tho-

mas Chaucer, by a daughter, became progenitor of the earls of Lincoln and of the De la Poles, dukes of Suffolk, the last of whom, Edward de la Pole, was beheaded for treason in the reign of Henry VII.; but it is very doubtful, after all, if he was really the son of Chaucer the poet. Various portraits of the face and person of Chaucer, we may add, have come down to us, some of which seem to be nearly of his own time. All represent him as of a noble and dignified presence; and, indeed, he has, in tradition, the reputation of having been one of the handsomest personages of his age. Granger has printed the following lines which delineate him graphically enough —

“ His stature was not very tall,  
Lean he was, his legs were small,  
Hosed within a stock of red,  
A buttoned bonnet on his head.”

This description agrees very well with an old painting of him, of which Mr Godwin has given an engraving in his second volume.

The works of Chaucer are very voluminous; consisting, besides several prose treatises, of his famous Canterbury tales, a poem extending to above 17,000 lines, without including the portion of which the genuineness is doubted, or the Parson's tale, which is in prose; the Romaunt of the Rose, a translation from the French of William de Lorris, of which there are nearly 8,000 lines; the poem of Troilus and Cressida, in five books; the House of Fame, in three books; and many minor pieces. Nearly all these productions are rich in beauty; and of those which are less known, the Romaunt of the Rose, the Troilus and Cressida, the Flower and Leaf, and the House of Fame, may be especially recommended to the attention of the lovers of genuine poetic inspiration, as evidencing all of them an affluence of imaginative genius, equal perhaps to any thing that is to be found even in the Canterbury tales themselves. It is in these tales, however, the work of his declining age, composed in the tranquillity of his sylvan retirement, and after his intercourse with the world's multitudes had become little more than a remembered dream, that he has alone given full manifestation of the whole strength and variety of his powers, and done justice to the liberality of nature. This poem is perhaps (with the exception of Lord Byron's Don Juan) the most wonderful example in literature of that composite style of writing, which, demanding in the author an almost universal susceptibility and skill of execution, overpowers us with a florid variety and magnificence of effect, akin to that produced by the mingled beauties and sublimities of external nature, or by the grander parts of the actual drama of human life itself. Chaucer is one of that short list of men of the highest genius who have been also men thoroughly conversant with the real world. It was to this intercourse with society as well as with books and with his own mind, that he no doubt owed in great part that extraordinary combination of almost opposite powers and qualifications which has given to his poetry such manifold and diversified charms. There is in truth hardly one constituent of the poetical character with which the writings he has left behind him do not prove him to have been splendidly endowed. If you deem the essence of genuine poetry to consist in that sublimity and soaring grandeur of conception which delights in escaping from the

real world altogether, and luxuriating only among the brighter hues and more varied forms of fiction, call up, with Milton, "him who left half-told the story of Cambuscan bold," or go to the magnificent and finished delineations of the Knight's tale, to the picture of Lycurgus, "the great king of Thrace, who like a Griffin looked about," or to the desolate horrors of the forest where "stood the temple of Mars armipotent," and the statue of the god of war himself, with

"The wolf that stood before him at his feet,  
With eyes blood-red, and of a man did eat."

Or, if you would linger over the scenery of a fairy land of gentler aspect and softer fascination, when from among many other examples of the same florid warmth of conception and honied eloquence, which might be quoted from the other productions of this author, we name only the allegory of the Flower and the Leaf, can we refer to any other delineation that poetic inspiration ever prompted, more richly gilded with all the sweetest hues and radiances of poetry? Still, however, it is in giving forceful utterance to the passions and affections of the human heart that this great poet is ever greatest. In simple, but yet most soul-subduing pathos, what writer of any age shall take precedence of him to whom we owe—passing over many other almost equally touching delineations—the two tales of Constance and Griselda, the last of which in particular is a creation of almost stainless and perfect beauty? But it is his admirable tact in describing and exposing the ridiculous in human character, that constitutes perhaps the attribute of Chaucer's genius in which he stands most alone. In humour, indeed, in satire, in rich and sometimes almost riotous jollity, in short, in comic power, by whatever name it may be called, it is hardly too much to affirm that he never has been equalled. We cannot here enumerate the many passages throughout his writings that might be quoted in illustration of this part of his poetic character; but we would refer generally to the prologues interspersed among the Canterbury tales as almost all of them inimitably admirable as examples of what we would describe—as well as to the tales of the Miller, the Reeve, the Wife of Bath, the Friar, the Sompnour, the Merchant, the Shipman, as particularly distinguished by the same species of excellence.

Several of Chaucer's compositions have been imitated or paraphrased in modern times. Indeed we believe a modernized version of the whole, or at least of the greater part of the Canterbury tales, was published in the beginning of the last century; but it probably was not very skillfully done. Dryden's admirable imitations of the Flower and Leaf, and of various parts of the Canterbury tales, published in his Fables, are familiar to all readers of English poetry—as are also those of the Wife of Bath's prologue, and of the Merchant's tale of January and May, so spiritedly executed by Pope. The Temple of Fame of the latter writer is also, as is well known, founded upon Chaucer's House of Fame; but the scheme and conduct of the one poem are in many respects quite distinct from those of the other. The finest part of Pope's poem, the description of the six columns on which the great "heirs of fame" are elevated, is entirely his own, in conception as in execution. Wordsworth has given us a version of the Prioress's tale, constructed on the principle of the least departure from the original



language that is necessary to render it intelligible to modern ears. It is executed with the taste and delicacy that might be expected from the author; but the tale in question is not calculated to diffuse a fair impression of the glories of 'the morning-star of English poetry,' as Wordsworth himself has finely designated Chaucer. If we remember aright, a translation of the whole of the *Canterbury tales* upon this principle was suggested and recommended some years ago in a paper in the *Retrospective Review*, and some very happy specimens given of the manner in which the task might be accomplished. Finally, in mentioning the several modern imitations of Chaucer, we ought not to forget a very noble one of the *Squire's tale*, (the famous unfinished story of *Cambuscan*) which appeared in the second volume of the *Liberal*, and the author of which, we think, intimated his intention, if his health should permit, of endeavouring to carry on and conclude the poem. We are not aware that he has fulfilled his promise; but there are few things we should like better to see than the completion of that attempt.

We cannot here enter into the controversy with regard to the versification of Chaucer. Mr Tyrrwhitt, in his admirable edition of the *Canterbury tales*, (the only part of Chaucer's works by the by that has yet been well edited,) unfolded with great ability and force of argument the doctrine, that the verse in which these poems are written, however irregular it may seem, is in truth as correctly *rythmical* as that now in use. The reason why it appears to be otherwise being, that we have now ceased to pronounce the final *e* in many words in which it was audible and constituted a distinct syllable in Chaucer's time. Up, we believe, to the appearance of the recent edition of the poems of *Surrey* and *Wyatt* by the late Dr Scott, Mr Tyrrwhitt's theory upon this subject was held to be the true one; but many critics and philologists have since been of opinion that it has been overturned by the examination of it given in that work. Mr Southey, we observe, in his selections from our ancient poets just published, speaks in one place of the universal opinion being now against the regular character of Chaucer's verse; but he afterwards acknowledges that he found he had spoken upon this head somewhat too hastily. For our own parts we will merely say, that we regard Dr Scott's arguments as quite inconclusive.<sup>6</sup> The editor of the last edition of *Warton's History of English Poetry*, long ago promised an examination of Mr Tyrrwhitt's *Essay*, in a supplementary volume to that publication, but the book, we believe, never has appeared, although the writer to whom we refer is perhaps better qualified than any one else to elucidate this interesting subject. His opinion, we gather from some hints he gives in his notes to *Warton*, is adverse to Tyrrwhitt's views.

Perhaps the truest as well as the most discernible index of a writer's popularity, is in general the number of his imitators in his own or the immediately succeeding generation. The most noticeable, at least, among the immediate effects which are wrought upon a nation's literature by the ascendancy of one man's genius, is in most cases the

<sup>6</sup> There are some observations on this subject by the late Mr James Boswell in the first volume of the last edition of *Shakspeare*, in 21 vols. by him and Mr Malone, published in 1821, but they are not very profound. Indeed, the writer's views as to English versification in general, are in many respects quite erroneous.

rushing up throughout its whole soil of something that has evidently taken both its form and its colour from the spirit of his productions, and which at the same time has seldom any other quality beyond these external resemblances to render it valuable or attractive. As heaven's thunder disdains not to be reverberated by the echoes of earth, so the voice of inspiration awakens, wherever it rings, its multiplying mockeries too, and is responded to from a thousand mimic throats whom it alone has made vocal. No name ever had a more plenteous tribute paid to it of this species of adulation than that of Chaucer. Even from the records of the first century after his death, all unvisited as it was by any gleam of genuine poetic inspiration, one of our antiquaries has reckoned up the names of no fewer than seventy such moilers, the carolings of all of whom are little better than an elaborate and lifeless mimicry of the strains of their mighty progenitor. Many of them, too, seem to have toiled at their occupation with a stout-hearted and untiring perseverance, which the service of Apollo has not always awakened even in the most favoured of its votaries. One of these unwearied moilers alone—Lydgate, the once celebrated monk of Bury—has left us above 250 different productions on all sorts of subjects; and seems, indeed, from the hints we have of his history, to have kept a sort of office for the manufacture and sale of poetry, and to have supplied his numerous customers as regularly and expeditiously as if he had been in the habit of throwing off the article by a steam-engine. This inexhaustible affluence of rhymes seems to have excited towards Lydgate in a very singular degree the admiration of his simple contemporaries: his popularity among whom, indeed, contrasted with the neglect and contempt wherewith he has been treated by their descendants, affords one of the most striking examples on record of the strange caprices of national taste, and the shadowy instability of human fame.

### John Lydgate.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1375.—DIED CIRC. A. D. 1461.

THE language of a country can only be improved by very slow degrees, and the writers consequently who lived at an early period of its formation, are rather to be estimated by their learning and general excellence of thought, than by their modes of expression. It ought not, therefore, to occasion much surprise, that most of the few authors who flourished in the age immediately succeeding that of Chaucer, exhibit little improvement in point of style, and seem rather to be hovering on the verge of the barbarism which that great poet had, by a sudden flight, left far behind, than ready to advance beyond the line which he had thus traced out. "I consider Chaucer," says Warton, "as a genial day in an English spring. A brilliant sun enlivens the face of nature with an unusual lustre: the sudden appearance of cloudless skies, and the unexpected warmth of a tepid atmosphere, after the gloom and the inclemencies of a tedious winter, fill our hearts with the visionary prospect of a speedy summer, and we fondly anticipate a long continuance of gentle gales and vernal serenity. But winter returns with redoubled horrors: the clouds condense more formidably

than before : and those tender buds, and early blossoms, which were called forth by the transient gleam of a temporary sun-shine, are nipped by frosts and torn by tempests." Nothing, however, appears to have taken place but what is common to almost every age of literature, and it would be wrong, perhaps, to understand the elegant comparison of the historian in any but the most restricted sense. It is not the appearance of only a few plants, or of plants wanting in luxuriance, that indicates with certainty the untimely blights of winter. The soil itself may be unfavourable to their growth, and the one or two which have flourished may have owed their increase to particular circumstances, and ought not, therefore, to be regarded as proper indicators of the season or the climate. Chaucer and Gower both enjoyed considerable advantages, and were men possessing much more than the average of talent. We are, therefore, in nowise to consider that literature went back because they were not generally succeeded by writers of greater or equal talent, than we are to consider that winter is returned because the fields are not covered with verdure as rich as the beds of some favoured garden. The most advanced periods of literature exhibit circumstances precisely the same as those to be observed in that of which we are speaking. Milton and Pope are the cynosures of their respective eras ; but it would be committing an important error to judge of the general state of literature in those periods from the productions of these poets. Neither of them indicated the common average of talent or learning then prevalent, and when they died there was no more a retrograde motion in literature, than there was in science at the death of Newton. Though, therefore, with the exception of Lydgate himself, the poets of his age were of very inferior merit to Chaucer, notwithstanding the advantage they enjoyed of living thirty or forty years later, we are not from this to infer that the progress of improvement was at a stand. Considering, indeed, the reputation Lydgate obtained, the value that was set upon his productions, and, above all, the well-known fact, that he opened a school for teaching the art of versification and composition to the sons of the nobility,—considering these circumstances, there is reason to believe that literature was making a sure though slow advance throughout the nation.

The date of Lydgate's birth is not known, but he is said to have enjoyed considerable distinction as a poet, about the year 1430. He was educated at Oxford, but appears to have remained at that university but a short time. On quitting it, he made the tour of France and Italy, and in both these countries studied with ardour and profit. In the one, poetry still retained much of the beauty and raciness which had characterised the Provençal minstrelsy ; in the other, Boccaccio had lately ingrafted on the harmonious language of Dante and Petrarch, all the gaiety and varied attractions of romance. To a man of taste like Lydgate, the materials of poetry thus laid before him could hardly fail of appearing of double value when viewed amid the very scenes of their creation. We accordingly find that, when he returned to England, he strenuously devoted himself to the cultivation of the poetic art, drawing the subjects of almost all his pieces from the writings of Boccaccio and French authors, and, in some instances, only translating them. While thus engaged, he was enjoying the retirement and advantages of the rich Benedictine abbey at Bury St Edmund's, of which



he was a monk. His celebrity was probably not a little aided by the circumstance of his being an ecclesiastic, and, as we have already mentioned, the name he acquired by his productions enabled him to open a school in the monastery for the introduction of the young nobility to the knowledge of polite literature. Few circumstances recorded of the present period are better adapted than this to give us a favourable impression of the state of the public mind. Hitherto the acquirements which fitted a man to shine in the battle-field, or the tournament, were the exclusive pursuit of the higher classes, and they were thought sufficiently well-prepared to adorn their station when they could bear themselves gallantly against an enemy or a rival. We now learn that it was beginning to be thought necessary to exhibit some power of mind, and to imitate the example already set by the nobility of France and Italy in the cultivation of literature. Instead, therefore, of considering as formerly, that it was on the professional minstrel, or the learned clerk only, that the skill in poetry, or science, could confer honour, the young courtiers began to envy the praise they obtained, and gradually acquiring a taste for the lighter accomplishments of the mind, soon became sensible of the universal excellence and dignity of knowledge. Lydgate himself was a very general scholar, and is said to have been acquainted, as far as the learning of his times would allow him, with geometry and astronomy, as well as theology, and the usual science of the schoolmen. According, however, to his own account he was little acquainted with any other language but French; and, if this be true, we have a curious proof in his works of the immense mass of poetical erudition which was imported into this country through the medium of that language, or at least through that in combination with Italian. The illustrations with which Lydgate and others of our very early poets adorned their pages, might be profitably examined with respect to the doubts which furnished matter for the long controversy on the subject of Shakspeare's learning. Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, have allusions in their poems to almost every fable and important event, in Greek and Roman history, and even the abstrusest doctrines of Plato and Aristotle find a place in their stories, and are dilated upon with minute ingenuity. The curious mixtures of truth and falsehood, and the equally strange perversions of philosophy which frequently startle the sober reader of such productions, only serve to exhibit in a stronger light the disjointed masses of learning thus brought together, and the inquirer into the literature of this period cannot help being continually tempted to speculate on the state of mind which must have necessarily resulted from so remarkable a confusion of wild tradition with the profoundest discoveries of the human intellect in its most healthy condition.

The catalogue which has been made of Lydgate's writings by the laborious Ritson, would lead us to regard him as one of the most fruitful authors of that or any other age. According to this list, he produced no fewer than two hundred and fifty separate pieces, and even supposing that a large portion of these have been falsely ascribed to him, he would still appear as a writer of indefatigable industry. His chief and best known productions are the 'Fall of Princes,' the 'Siege of Thebes,' and the 'Destruction of Troy.' Among the most popular of his minor pieces was the 'Dance of Death,' a translation made from

the French, at the instance of the chapter of St Paul's, who employed it to illustrate the representations with which their cloister was decorated. This was not the only production of his pen undertaken at the special request of his learned brethren. The abbot of St Albans engaged him to translate the life of his patron-saint into English verse, and paid him one hundred shillings for the manuscript and illuminations with which it was ornamented. He was, it appears, always at the call of those whom he esteemed, or from whom he expected a reward, and hence probably the variety and number of his poems, the light occasions on which some of them seem to have been written, and in part, perhaps, the little merit which some of them possess.

With all the faults of diffuseness and want of vigour of which Lydgate has been accused, he exhibits the most decided marks of improved clearness, both in style and versification. In the elegant little poem, entitled the 'Lyfe of our Lady,' passages occur which breathe an Italian sweetness, and indicate the profit our author had received from having his ear tutored with the mellifluous flow of southern speech. The opening stanzas of this piece have been universally admired for their beauty, both of expression and imagery. Addressing the reader, he says,—

" O thoughtfull hertè plonged in distresse  
With slombre of slouth, this long wynter's night !  
Out of the slepe of mortal hevynesse  
Awake anon, and loke upon the light  
Of thilkè sterre, that with her bemys bright,  
And with the shynynge of her stremes meryè,  
Is wont to glad all our hemisperie.

This sterre in beauteie passith Pleiades,  
Bothe of shynynge, and eke of stremes clere,  
Bootes, and Arctur, and also Iades,  
And Esperus, whan that it doth appere :  
For this is Spica, with her brightè spere,  
That towarde evyn, at midnyght, and at morowe,  
Downe from hevyn adawith al our sorowe.—

And dryeth up the bytter terys wete  
Of Aurora, after the morowe graye,  
That she in wepyng dothe on flowres flete,  
In lusty Aprill, and in fresshè Maye :  
And causeth Phebus, the bryght somers daye,  
With his wayve gold-yborned, bryght and fayre,  
To enchase the mystès of our cloudy ayre.

Now fayrè sterre, O sterre of sterrys all !  
Whose lyght to se the angels do delyte,  
So let the gold-dewe of thy grace yfall  
Into my breste, lyke scalys fayre and whyte,  
Me to enspire!" . . . . .

Numerous passages occur of equal elegance, in other parts of his works. The description given of Fortune in the 'Fall of Princes,' would bear comparison with the most admired personifications in the classical writers. Of her dress he says :—

" Her habyte was of manyfolde colours,  
Watchet blewè of fayned stedfastnesse ;  
Her gold allayed like sun in watry showres,  
Meyxt with grene, for change and doublenesse.

The introduction of Fortune is followed by that of Caius Marius, which gives occasion for another delineation of equal power:—

“ Blacke was his wede, and his habyte also,  
His heed unkempt, his lockis hore and gray,  
His loke doune-cast in token of sorowe and wo.  
On his chekès the saltè teares lay,  
Which bare recorde of his deadly affray.  
His robè stayned was with Romaine blode,  
His sworde aye redy whet to do vengeance;  
Lyke a tyrant most furyouse and wode,  
In slaughter and murdre set at his plesaunce.”

Of his skill in description, the following will give a favourable idea. He is speaking of Polymite wandering through a wilderness:—

“ Holding his way, of hertè nothing light,  
Wate and weary, till it draweth to night:  
And al the day beholding ewirnon,  
He neither sawe ne castle, towre, ne town;  
The which thing greveth him full sore.  
And sodenly the see began to rore,  
Winde and tempèst hidiously to arise,  
The rain doun beten in ful grisly wise;  
That many à beast thereof was adrad,  
And nigh for ferè gan to waxè mad,  
As it seemed by the full wofull sownes,  
Of tigers, beres, of bores, and of lionnes;  
Which to refute, and himself for to save,  
Evrich in haste draweth to his cave.”

It is, however, in descriptions of morning, or of soft and bowery shades, that the genius of Lydgate chiefly delighted to expatiate, and in these, its favourite subjects, it may challenge equality with Chaucer, or any other poet in the language. Take, for example, the following:—

“ Tyll at the last, among the bowès glade,  
Of adventure, I caught a plesaunt shade;  
Ful smothe, and playn, and lusty for to sene,  
And soft as velvette was the yonge grene:  
Where from my hors I did alight as fast,  
And on a bowe aloft his reynè cast.  
So faynte and wate of werynesse I was,  
That I me layd adoune upon the gras,  
Upon a brinkè, shortly for to telle,  
Besyde the river of a cristall welle;  
And the watèr, as I rehersè can,  
Like quickè-silver in his streames yran,  
Of which the gravell and the brightè stone,  
As any golde, agaynst the sun yshone.”

The morning is thus described:—

“ When that the rowes and the rayes redde  
Eastward to us full early ginnen spredde,  
Even at the twylyght in the dawneyng,  
Whan that the larke of custom ginneth synge,  
For to saluè in her heavenly laye,  
The lusty goddesse of the morowe graye,  
I meane Aurora, which afore the sunne  
Is wont t' enchase the blacke skyès dunne,  
And al the darknesse of the dimmy night:  
And freshe Phebùs, with comforte of his light,



And with the brightnes of his beemes shene,  
Hath overgylt the huge hyllës grene;  
And flowrës eke, agayn the morowe-tide,  
Upon their stalkes gan playn their leavës wide."

It is from such passages as these that the opinions which Winstanley and others have expressed on the comparative merits of Lydgate, seem worthy of attention. According to their notion, "He was the best poet of his age, for if Chaucer's coin were of greater weight for deeper learning, Lydgate's was of a more refined standard for purer language." Of the value which was set upon his writings in his own age, some idea may be formed from the expense bestowed in binding and illustrating them, and from their being regarded as a fit present to the most exalted personages. Thus the abbot of St Albans spent no less than three pounds—a large sum for that period—on the binding of the poem which Lydgate wrote at his desire; and the manuscript of that which he composed in commemoration of St Edmund, and which was presented to Henry the Sixth on his visit to Bury, is one of the most splendidly ornamented in existence. Not only are the initial letters executed in colours of the greatest brilliancy, but the poetry itself is illustrated with no less than a hundred and twenty designs, exquisitely painted, and among which are portraits of Lydgate himself, of the abbot of St Edmund's monastery, and two of the king, in one of which he is seen on his throne with the abbot kneeling before him, and presenting the manuscript. In the other he is represented under the figure of a child praying prostrate on a carpet before the shrine of the patron saint.

From these circumstances, and from the intrinsic merit of his poems, there can be little doubt but that Lydgate deserves a conspicuous place among the fathers of English poetry. He is, by turns, forcible and tender; and though his genius was far less inventive than that of Chaucer, and his productions, in consequence, are greatly inferior in all those points which regard delineation of character, or narration, he was not unworthy to succeed him in the simpler walks of the muse. In them he followed his great master with a faithful, though a mild and gentle spirit, nor ought it ever to be forgotten that he was the first of our poets to infuse into the language the sweetness and amenity of Italian.

## Richard of Chichester.

FLOR. CIRC. A. D. 1360.

THE earliest date which occurs in the scanty memorials of this writer's life, is that of 1350, when he joined the fraternity of the Benedictine monastery of Saint Peter's, Westminster. Nothing is known of his parentage, or of the place of his education, but it is inferred from the erudition he displayed in subsequent years, that he must have enjoyed the advantages which were at that time only open to the more respectable classes of the community. The greater part of his life appears to have been spent in the monastery, to which he attached himself at the time above mentioned, his name occurring in the abbey rolls, as late as the year 1399, that is nearly fifty years after his uniting himself to

the society. During this long period, however, the monotony of conventual seclusion was broken by his active application to the study of the old British and Anglo-Saxon antiquities. In this pursuit, he made such important advances, that he received the honourable appellation of the Historiographer, and one of his biographers asserts, that he was allowed to make a tour for the purpose of inspecting the principal libraries of the kingdom. We can scarcely imagine any undertaking more likely to prove useful to the age in which he lived than this. Many valuable manuscripts must have by that time become unintelligible, and almost forgotten, in the several depositories where they had been hoarded up. But the fact rests on the single testimony of Pits, who has given no clue for the discovery of the source whence he derived his information. Some probability is added to his statement from the known fact of Richard of Chichester's extensive acquaintance with matters of ancient British history, and it would scarcely seem likely that an author devoted to such a branch of learning, could remain contented without examining the stores of information to be found in various parts of the kingdom. It is also reasonable to suppose, that a writer whose chief object it was to elucidate the antiquities of his own country, would not fail to employ the advantages he possessed for travelling to explore its treasures, before turning his attention to those of foreign countries. The well-accredited fact, that in the latter part of his life, he visited Italy, and spent some time at Rome, thus tends to confirm the tradition of his having collected the materials of his works, from an actual examination of the great libraries belonging to the ecclesiastical establishments of England. The period fixed for his Italian journey is that which occurred between the years 1391 and 1397. He is said to have lived but four or five years after his return, and to have been interred in the abbey cloisters.

From the catalogue of his works, Richard of Chichester appears to have been a man of general ability and learning, and there is reason for considering him one of the most useful scholars of his age. Besides his principal treatise, that '*De Situ Britanniae*,' he wrote a tract on the Greater and Lesser Creed, and another on Ecclesiastical Offices, and a History of England from the time of Hengist to the year 1348. Of this work, however, Dr Whittaker gives but a poor character. "The hope," says he, "of meeting with discoveries as great in the Roman, British, and Saxon history, as he has given us concerning the preceding period, induced me to examine the work. But my expectations were greatly disappointed. The learned scholar and the deep antiquarian, I found sunk into an ignorant novice, sometimes the copier of Huntingdon, but generally the transcriber of Geoffrey. Deprived of his Roman guides, Richard showed himself as ignorant and as injudicious as any of his illiterate contemporaries about him in Italy."

Notwithstanding the license he obtained to travel, and the tour which he is supposed to have taken in search of British antiquities, the superiors of his monastery appear at one time to have regarded the pursuits in which he was engaged with no favourable eye. In one part of his work *De Situ Britanniae*, he represents himself as arguing with some one in defence of his studies; "Of what service," asked his opponent, "are these things but to delude the world with unmeaning trifles?" To which he replies, "Do not such narratives exhibit proofs of divine

providence? Does it not hence appear, that an evangelical sermon concerning the death and merits of Christ enlightened and subdued a world overrun with Gentile superstitions? In the remark that such things are properly treated of in systems of chronology, I rejoin: nor is it too much to know that our ancestors were not, as some assert, *autocthonous*, sprung from the earth; but that God opened the book of nature to display his omnipotence, such as it is described in the book of Moses." But from what follows, he seems to have felt dissatisfied with his own reasoning, for he says, "When the abbot answered, that works which were intended merely to acquire reputation for their authors from posterity, should be committed to the flames, I confess with gratitude that I repented of this undertaking. The remainder of the work is therefore only a chronological abridgment, which I present to the reader, whom I commend to the goodness and protection of God; and at the same time request that he will pray for me to our Holy Father, who is merciful and inclined to forgiveness." This passage is curious and valuable as enabling us to judge in some degree of the personal character of the author. He was evidently a man of enlightened mind, or he would not have thought of leaving the circle of monastic study; but it is equally clear that he was conscientiously alive to the duties of his profession, or he would never have so readily yielded to the suggestions of his opponents.

### John Harding.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1378.—DIED A. D. 1461.

THE date of this writer's birth is uncertain; but the best authenticated accounts fix it about the year 1378. He is also supposed on the same authority to have been a native of one of the northern counties, and to have sprung from a family of distinction in that part of the kingdom. As was the custom of the age, his parents placed him, in his twelfth year, in the household of Percy, earl of Northumberland, in whose service he continued till he was twenty-five. By this time he was accomplished in all the acquirements requisite to the rank he held in life, and in the famous battle of Shrewsbury, which took place in 1403, he distinguished himself so well, as ever after to enjoy the reputation of being an excellent soldier. Some confusion of dates has puzzled his biographers in this part of his memoirs, and he has been said to have won his first laurels in the defence of Roxburgh castle against the Scots. This statement, however, has been proved incorrect, and the battle of Shrewsbury was, without doubt, the occasion of his earliest display of military talent.

Courage, patriotism, and sagacity, were exhibited in the next adventure, of which mention is made in the few notices that remain of his life. It had been long the desire of the English monarchs to prove that the kings of Scotland were legally bound to do them homage for their crowns. But this could not be effected without documents, and no political ingenuity had as yet been able to discover the means by which such vouchers were to be procured. But Harding at length undertook to make his way into Scotland for the express purpose of ob-



taining possession of such of the national instruments as might be sufficient to solve the point in dispute in the manner the English desired. The common opinion is that he succeeded in his hazardous attempt, and that he really presented the valuable documents in question to his monarch. Ritson, however, boldly declares that "he was a most dexterous forger," and that he "obtained great rewards from Henry the Sixth and Edward the Fourth, for a number of supposititious charters of fealty and homage from the Scottish monarchs to the kings of England, which he pretended to have obtained in Scotland at the hazard of his life." But the milder supposition, and that which best accords with the general accounts of his life and character is, that he was himself deceived as to the genuineness of the papers he presented; that he obtained them at the risk of his personal safety, as is related, but that they were forgeries palmed upon him by some cunning deceiver.

In whatever way Harding became possessed of these documents, they acquired him the constant favour of his king, and led him, in the end, to compose the work for which alone he is named in literary history: 'The Chronicle of England into the reign of King Edward the Fourth, in verse.' But this production exhibits none of those graces which Chaucer and his cotemporaries had introduced into the national poetry. The former of these writers died when Harding had just reached manhood; and his works must have been familiar to him when he became an author. Little credit, therefore, can be allowed him for poetic talent; but his chronicle is not without its value, and the antiquary turns to it with pleasure, as a curious, though bold and unadorned narrative of actual events. He died about the year 1461.

## Lady Juliana Berners.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1388.

THE reign of Edward IV. was graced by one female authoress, the Lady Juliana, sister to Richard Lord Berners, and prioress of the monastery of Sopewell. Mr Ballard supposes that this lady was born at Roding in Essex, about the beginning of the 15th century. If, however, the general opinion be correct, that she was the daughter of Sir James Berners of Berners-Roding, her birth must have been earlier by some years than Mr Ballard supposes: for Sir James was beheaded in 1388. From the few biographical notices which we possess of the Lady Juliana, we are led to conclude that she was not less distinguished for beauty and elegance of person, than for mental accomplishments. Holinshed speaks of her as "a gentlewoman indued with excellent giftes of body and mind," and informs us that she was very fond of some masculine amusements, especially the sports of the field. Her skill in hunting and hawking was so great, that she composed treatises upon these sports in verse, which were so highly esteemed that they were published while the art of printing was yet in its infancy in England, in the famous 'Boke of St Alban's,' the first edition of which is supposed to have been printed at the monastery of St Alban's in 1481. An edition of this 'boke,' published at London in 1595, bears the following title,—“The gentleman's academic, or the Book of St Al-

ban's; containing three most exact and excellent books, the first of hawking, the second of all the proper terms of hunting, and the last of armory; all compiled by Juliana Barnes, in the year from the incarnation of Christ, 1486; and now reduced into better method by S. M." It is pretty clear that the editor of this edition ascribes a false date to Lady Juliana's performances. Sir James Berners' daughter, if alive at this period, must have been nearly one hundred years old,—no very likely age certainly to find amusement in discoursing on field sports. The colophon of the St Alban's edition runs thus:—"And here now endeth the boke of chasyng of armys, translatyt and compylyt togedyr at Saint Albons, the yere from thyncarnacyon of our Lorde Jhesu Crist, MCCCCLXXXVI;" but, it has been justly observed, all that we are entitled to infer from this is, that that part of the work which relates to heraldry was not written by Lady Juliana, although generally ascribed to her. Mr Haslewood, the editor of an excellent fac-simile reprint of the Boke of St Albans, as printed by Wynkyn de Worde, is of opinion that the only portions of the volume which can with certainty be attributed to Lady Juliana, are, 1st, a small portion of the treatise on hawking; 2d, the treatise upon hunting; 3d, a short list of the beasts of chase; and, 4th, another list of beasts and fowls. The following sort of lyrical epilogue to the book of hunting is not entirely devoid of merit:—

" A faithful friend would I fain find,  
To find him there he might be found;  
But now is the world wext so unkind,  
That friendship is fall to the ground.  
Now a friend I have found,  
That I will neither *ban'* ne curse;  
But, of all friends in field or town,  
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

My purse it is my privy wife:  
(This song I dare both sing and say:)  
It parteth men of muche strife,  
When every man for himself shall pay.  
As I ride in rich array  
For gold and silver men will me *flourish*;<sup>1</sup>  
By this matter I dare well say |  
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

As I ride with gold so *rede*,  
And have to do with landys law,  
Men for my money will make me speed,  
And for my goods they will me *knaue*  
More and less to me will draw,  
Both the better and the worse:  
By this matter I say *in sawe*<sup>2</sup>  
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

It fell by me upon a time,  
As it hath *doo* by many one *mo*,  
My horse, my neat, my sheep, my swine,  
And all my goods they fell me fro;  
I went to my friends and told them so;  
And home again they bade me truss:

<sup>1</sup> Excecrate.<sup>2</sup> Probably *flatter*; but the rhyme is indefensible.<sup>3</sup> Proverbially.

I said again, when I was wo,  
Ever gramercy mine own purse.

Therefore I rede you, sires all,  
To assay your friends *or* ye have need :  
For, *and* ye come down and have a fall,  
Full few of them for you will *grede*.<sup>4</sup>  
Therefore, assay them every one,  
Both the better and the worse.—  
Our Lord, that shope both sun and moon,  
Send us spending in our purse !”

“From an abbess disposed to turn author,” says Warton, “we might more reasonably have expected a manual of meditations for the closet, or select rules for making salves, or distilling strong waters. But the diversions of the field were not thought inconsistent with the character of a religious lady of this eminent rank, who resembled an abbot in respect of exercising manorial jurisdiction, and who hawked and hunted in common with other ladies of distinction.” Yet the claims of the fair authoress to original composition are disputed both by Warton and Dalloway, who are of opinion, that notwithstanding Lady Juliana’s practical acquaintance with her subject, she contented herself with selecting a French treatise as her favourite pastimes for translation. We are unable to determine the point, which indeed Warton himself does not undertake to demonstrate.

## William Caxton.

BORN CIRC. A. D. 1412.—DIED A. D. 1492.

Few names occur in English history more fitted to excite a feeling of gratitude than that of Caxton. Literature, when he appeared in the world, had just broken from its cradle, and required, in proportion to its increasing strength, new and rapid increase of circulation. The multiplication of books by the labour of transcribers was a progress as slow as it was expensive, and could only afford a sufficient supply of copies when the number of readers was extremely small. It is true that as the demand for manuscripts increased, the class of persons engaged for transcribing them would also enlarge itself: but this could not lessen the expense of copying,—each transcriber would have to be maintained by his labour, and every purchaser of a manuscript in the ordinary course of such transactions would, therefore, have to pay a price equivalent to his support, while copying the work in demand. The monks had produced large numbers of manuscripts, and the curious and diligent scholar might avail himself sometimes of the stores thus heaped up; but the labours of the convent were not likely to be employed in aid of any new species of literature,—abbots would not set their fraternity to copy poems or treatises which might contain satires on their habits, or contradictions of their systems,—and he, therefore, who would possess himself of a work of this modern character, was obliged to obtain it at considerable expense of money or labour. With

<sup>4</sup> Cry, lament.



the diffusion of a taste for inquiry, the want of books became more and more severely felt, the restorers of learning strove in vain to satisfy the anxious applications of their followers, and the people at large heard of the worth of literature, and were sufficiently improved to desire an acquaintance with it, but found, at the first step towards acquisition, an almost insuperable barrier to their progress.

William Caxton, who contributed so greatly to remove this impediment to the diffusion of knowledge in England, was a native of Kent, and was born in the latter part of the reign of Henry the Fourth. His parents were persons in the middle rank of life, but his mother was sufficiently well-informed to be able to instruct him herself in reading and writing, accomplishments in those days not universally possessed by the female part of the population. At the age of fifteen he was bound apprentice to a Mr Robert Large, a respectable mercer of London, and who, in the year 1430, served the office of lord-mayor. Caxton continued with him till his death, which occurred in 1441, and the integrity with which he had fulfilled his duty was proved by the will of his employer, who left him thirty-four marks, and made the most affectionate mention of his virtuous conduct.

The respect he had acquired with Mr Large, placed Caxton in an advantageous situation among the merchants of the city, and the year after the death of his master, he went to the continent, and was appointed by them to superintend their affairs as factor in Holland and the Low countries. He remained abroad twenty-three years, and during that time was, it would appear, principally occupied in his business as a merchant. But his biographers have not been able to discover any precise details respecting him from the time of his leaving England till the year 1464, when he was appointed one of the two commissioners to whom the English government entrusted the important office of settling the commercial dispute into which it had entered with the duke of Burgundy. It is evident from this circumstance that he had been steadily advancing in fortune and reputation during his residence on the continent, and there is every reason to believe that he, at the same time, acquired a large stock of learning and general information. The Netherlands were at that period the great nursery of erudition; the profoundest and most active scholars were assembled there,—theology and classical literature had poured their richest and most valuable stores into the libraries,—and the churches were filled with the noblest productions of the fine arts. It was impossible that an aspiring and intelligent mind like that of Caxton should remain without profit amid such temptations to learning. But there was another circumstance which could not fail of being viewed by a man of his character with the most intense interest. Printing had been lately invented, and the perseverance and ingenuity with which many of the best scholars in Italy, Germany, and other parts of the continent had furthered the first rude attempts made in the art, were at this period demonstrating in the most striking manner its importance to the interests of literature. It is not known when Caxton commenced his labours as a printer; but soon after his appointment to some official situation in the court of the duchess of Burgundy, the sister of King Edward, he printed his translation of the *Recuyell*, or a collection of the Histories of Troye, by Raoul le Fevre. Both the translation and the printing of

this work were undertaken at the request of the duchess, but were delayed above ten years by the fears which Caxton entertained of his inability to execute the task. He has himself left on record the time employed in this—for that age—laborious enterprise. “The translation,” he says, “was begun in Bruges, the first of Marche, in the yere 1468, continued in Gaunt, and finished in Colen, the 19th of September, 1471.” But this was the least fatiguing part of the design. The version being completed, he then “deliberated in himself,” says he, “to take the labour in hand of printing it together with the third book of the destruction of Troye, translated of late by John Lydgate, a monk of Burye, in English ritual.” It is not unpleasing to hear him utter his complaints respecting the fatigues he had undergone in writing the translation. “Thus,” says he, “end I this book, and for as much as in wrytynge of the same, my penne is worne, myne hand wery, and myne eyes dimmed with overmuch lokyng on the whit paper; and that age crepeth on me daily, and feebleth all the body, and also because I have promised to dyverce gentlemen and to my frendes to addresse to them as hastily as I might this said booke; therefore I have practised and learned, at my great charge and dispense, to ordeyne this said booke in prynte after the manner and forme as ye may here see, and is not writen with penne and ynke as other bookes been, to the end that every man may have them attones for all the bookes of this streye named. The *Recuyell* of the Historye of Troye, thus imprinted as ye here see, were begonne in one day, and also finished in one day.”

Before leaving the continent, Caxton had also printed another work of some extent,—Bartholomeus de Proprietatibus Rerum; but the date of his return to England is a subject of dispute; and the only settled point in the chronology of this part of his life, is, that in the year 1471 he was regularly established in Westminster as a printer. The ‘Dictes or Sayengis’ of the philosophers, appeared from his press at that period, and the fame he had acquired by his art not only introduced him to the principal men of the country, but procured him the privilege of carrying on his business in the almonry of the abbey,—a circumstance which is to this day kept in mind, by the appellation of the *chapel*, the common name among printers of their work-room.

The works which Caxton now produced in quick succession, are too numerous to allow of our giving their titles. For some time he was the only one who practised the art in this country, but a few years after his establishment in Westminster, some person set up the business at Oxford, and such was the increasing demand for books, that in 1483, an act of parliament was passed, entitling “any artificer or merchant stranger, of whatever realm or country he was or should be of, to bring into the realme and selle by retaile or otherwise, aine bookes written or printed,” there being, it was stated, “but few printers within the realme, which could well exercise and occupie the science and crafte of printing.” We should form, however, but a very imperfect idea of Caxton’s character, did we view him simply as a printer at this time. While anxiously engaged in overcoming the many difficulties which necessarily attend the exercise of any new art, he was also occupied in producing by his own pen, most of the works on which his press was to be employed. Besides several other translations from the French, he produced one of

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from that language in 1480, and about the same time finished printing his work, entitled 'The Chronicles of England.' The following year, appeared the translation of Godfrey of Bologne, which he says he made "to the ende that every Christen man may be the better convinced, the enterprize was for the defense of Christendome and to recover the said cyte of Jerusalem." Cicero's *Treatises* on Old age and of Friendship, followed soon after, and in 1482, the celebrated *Polychronicon* of Barnulph Higden, translated into English by Trevisa. In the preface to this work, Caxton says, "that he had carefully rewritten it, and had somewhatt changed the rude and olde English, that is to wyte certayne wordes which in these dayes are neither used ne understude."

Nothing appears with the name of Caxton, after 1490, and according to the calculation of his most curious biographers, he was then not less than ninety years of age. He was still, however, employed, and the last effort of his industry was directed to the translation of the "*Vitæ Patrum*, or the righte devout and solitairye lyfe of the anciente or olde holy faders, hermytes dwellynge in the deserts." It is a singular circumstance, that he concluded this work on the day he died, which event took place in the latter end of May, or the beginning of June 1492. He was succeeded in his business by a German printer, named De Unde, whom he brought with him from the continent, and an apprentice of his soon after set up the trade in the city. Printing establishments were now also to be found in several other parts of the kingdom, and in proportion to the extension of the business, the materials of the art became improved. It has been observed, that some of the most admirable specimens of typography were produced in the age immediately succeeding its invention; and when it is considered, that the first types used were cut out of wood,—that after the manufacture of metallic letters, the preparations for printing the Vulgate, published at Mentz in 1450, occupied eight years,—and that it was not till 1459 the casting of metal types was introduced,—surprise may well be felt, when the clear and beautiful pages are perused which proceeded from the press before the close of the century.

The character which Caxton bore in his private capacity, was that of a pious, industrious, and, in all respects most virtuous man. His education had been that of a tradesman only, and he often observed that his learning was confined to an acquaintance with English and French. Uninstructed however, as he had been in the higher walks of scholarship, he did much towards enlarging the circle of general literature in this country, and though several of the works he published are strongly imbued with the errors common to his age, they were in many respects calculated to create a love of reading, and quicken the appetite for intelligence. To the book of Chivalry which he translated from the French, he affixed an epilogue of his own composition, and did we possess no other means of judging of his character but that, we should be greatly inclined to give him praise for the most generous love of benevolence and high morality.

END OF VOL. I.











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